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A SUPPER AT THE FARM.



THE
STORY OF A CITY ARAB.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A POCKET BIBLE,"
"BOUGHTON GRANGE," ETC.



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PREFACE.

It has been said that "*great cities are great evils, seminaries of vice and schools for profligacy; that they are Satan's universities, where his first-rate scholars in all branches of ungodly learning are trained up for his service, and to fill the most important offices in his kingdom of darkness;*" that they are "the inland seas in Satan's dominion, where his chief merchants trade in all articles of abomination, and carry on rebellion against heaven." Further, it has been said that "the more the fallen children of man herd together, the more deeply they corrupt one another; every one bringing some vice or vanity with him, and so adding to the common stock, till the aggregate amount of all manner of wickedness in a large town is enormous."

There is some truth, doubtless, in these representations, though they may admit of important qualifications. It will not be denied, that in every

large city which has yet been known, there has been beneath the surface of general society an alarming mass of ignorance, immorality, and crime, combined with physical suffering, poverty, destitution, and shame.

When the following story was written, and during the time it appeared from week to week in the "Leisure Hour," public attention was widely and urgently called to a numerous class in the condition just referred to—especially in London. The unwholesome and often pestilential state of the human sties in which they herded together;—the means, lawful or unlawful, by which they contrived, from day to day, to pick up a wretched subsistence;—the crimes of which some of them were proved to be guilty, and the crimes of which others were suspected;—the orgies in which they occasionally indulged;—the danger to the community, or to the respectable part of it, arising from its proximity to this class of outcasts;—and the means of lessening this danger, and at the same time of reducing the amount of guilt and misery;—all these and many other topics connected with the question of the day were placed before the readers of almost every public print, as a reference to the newspapers and other periodical literature of that date will show.

In addition, therefore, to all the previous knowledge he possessed on the subject of which he was writing, the author had the advantage of the experience, observation, and opinions of others. How many stirring, able articles, and faithful descriptions he read in daily journals, weekly papers, monthly magazines, quarterly reviews, and annual reports, he cannot recall to mind, nor is it necessary. Even the sources from which he gathered some of his scenes are now forgotten. It is enough to say, that the story as it remains was the fruit of much study and research; that its delineations are given either from personal knowledge and remembrance, or from the trustworthy recorded observations of earnest men; and that, though the story is imaginary in its structure, the materials of which it is formed and built up are, in all essential particulars, true. If any reader in the present day should object to truth "in fairy fiction drest," let him call the story a parable, and his objections will probably cease.

In revising the story, or the parable, for separate publication, the author has neither added much nor taken much away. It was not necessary to give an additionally evangelical bias to the book, because the whole series of papers was (as the author hopes and

believes) so imbued with the spirit of the gospel as not to be mistaken ; and because frequent interpolations of sentiment, however good and pious, would weaken the interest of the story (or parable) without strengthening the foundation of Christianity on which it is built. Occasionally, however, a few words, or sentences, and here and there a page or two, have been added, to make a recognition of the great truths of the gospel more prominent—namely, that all men need salvation ; and that the salvation they need is to be found only through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ ; with the benefits of his sacrifice applied to the heart and conscience by the sanctifying influence of God's gracious and Holy Spirit.

For the same reason, very little has been taken away : the interest of the story would have been weakened, and no good answered. Writing under a sense of a high responsibility, the author was careful, in the first draft of his story, to avoid everything calculated to produce a bad effect upon the mind of any reader ; and in reading again line by line and word by word, what he wrote some years ago, he has found nothing of this character to blot out.

Style, however, is a matter of taste ; and the

author has chosen to retain the style in which the story first appeared, believing that there are few readers so fastidious and so unreasonable as to expect the rude and uneducated, either in city or in rural life, to talk according to either grammatical or orthoepical rules. A city Arab, a Kentish farmer, an Irish charwoman, and a Blankshire rustic, have each and all a dialect of their own; and if we would hear what they have to say, we must hear it in their own peculiar words and phrases.

In the days of which this story treats, few, if any, efforts were made for either the temporal or spiritual welfare of such heathens at home as it describes; and the hero of the tale is justified in saying that "no man cared, or seemed to care, for their souls." Perhaps the only systematic and recognised machinery adapted to the purpose of conveying the light of Divine truth to those who thus sat in darkness and the shadow of death (apart from the parochial system, of which the author desires to speak respectfully and tenderly), was that of Sunday Schools. This system, however, was in its early infancy, and, except in isolated cases like that of little Fanny, did little more, and professed to do little more, than to give the rudiments of ordinary secular instruction. Besides,

it scarcely descended in its influence so low as to reach to a class below that of the well known honest and industrious poor — the children of rural labourers in the country, and of artizans in towns.

But in the days *in* which this story was written, those times of neglect had, in part at least, passed away. What Sunday Schools had failed to accomplish for the young City Arab, Ragged Schools had taken up with encouraging success; and the City Mission had, by its ministering agents, penetrated into haunts which were confessedly almost closed against the ordinary preachers of the gospel. Added to these efforts of combined Christian benevolence and sympathy, others were organized, having for their object the rescue of the degraded London pariahs from enforced idleness and its consequent poverty and crime.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God,” and against the people of God, and against their ways and doings. When missionary societies were formed for sending the gospel to distant lands unblest by its light, the sneering reproach was that the utopian efforts thus made for converting the heathen, who never would be converted, and were well enough as they were, had better be employed on behalf of the heathens at home. When

Christians banded together to rescue black and coloured slaves from cruel thralldom, and to give them the rights of a common humanity, there were not wanting those who scornfully asked why the philanthropists overlooked the wretched and miserable of their own colour around them? When men and women, almost at the risk of life—certainly of personal safety, and at the sacrifice of ease and comfort—ventured with the Bible and with tracts into such haunts of wretchedness and vice as that of “Whiskers’ Rents,” they were described (not altogether by those to whom they went, but by the respectable of this world) as fanatics, or caricatured as fools, or abused as hypocrites; and bibles and tracts were weighed in the objectors’ scales, and found wanting. And now that means are adopted—though not to the extent of which they are capable—for the social and physical, as well as the moral and spiritual, regeneration of the guilty and abandoned, there seems to be arising an advocacy for a return to something like the penal system of our ancestors in the “good old times,” when vagrants, who could give no good account of themselves, were sentenced to be chained, branded, whipped, sold as slaves, or hung, and thus put out of the way of doing further mischief.

In other words, we are now told that the population of such places as Whiskers' Rents—otherwise called "Guilt Gardens"—are so far gone as to be beyond the hope of redemption; and that it is utterly impossible for such people, either in infancy, youth, or maturity, to become useful members of society, or to receive and embrace the good news of God's free and unlimited mercy and salvation. In still other words, we are told that that gospel which is emphatically intended for the lowest and vilest of the vile, is, as far as these wretched beings are concerned, a miserable failure.

Now this is untrue, and as malicious as it is untrue. Those who say such things might know, if they would, that God's Holy Spirit has blessed, and is blessing, the truth of God's word to the eternal salvation and temporal well-being of many of these once depraved and degraded outcasts.

But should it be shown that the means employed are not adequate to the end proposed,—that Satan still triumphs and sin reigns, and guilt and crime are rampant in these dark and dismal places in our cities; and should our crowded prisons and our calendars of criminal jurisprudence be adduced in proof of the theory just referred to, what then?

The Christian need not be careful to answer the

question, nor to disprove the charge thus covertly brought against the gospel of God's dear Son. For while bemoaning the apathy, and inconsistency, and worldliness, and divisions, which, each in their way, hinder that gospel, and choke the word and make it unfruitful, he can at the same time open the sure word of prophecy, and point with steady faith to such declarations as these: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

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THE
STORY OF A CITY ARAB.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST SCENE IN MEMORY'S PHANTASMAGORIA.

By the dim light of a single candle, a woman, not many years past girlhood, sat working with her needle. Her dress was mean and scanty; her face, though so young, was haggard and careworn; her fingers were very thin and pale, yet not paler than her countenance; and a constant racking cough caused her frequently to suspend her labours, while it shook her whole frame with its violence, and convulsed her features with pain.

It was a dark night, and stormy and cold. Mingled snow and sleet beat against the broken window, which rattled in its frame; while the scanty curtain—a checked apron—which was suspended before it and barely concealed it, swayed to and fro with every gust of wind.

The apartment was a wretched attic in a dilapidated

house in a London alley. The plastered walls of the garret were discoloured with damp, and in some places had given way, laying bare the black, rotten laths, between which the air whistled freely in, playing with the feeble blaze of the rushlight, threatening every moment to extinguish it, and causing a stream of melted tallow to gutter down the iron candlestick. The flooring of the room was worm-eaten, rotten, and uneven; many of the boards were loose, and some broken away, leaving dangerous gaps for unwary footsteps. The furniture of the room was a small deal table; two chairs, one of which was occupied by the poor watcher and worker; and a flock mattress, on the floor, on which lay a child, whose age might be five or six years, and who, wakened by the uproar of the elements without, was watching his mother—for the young woman was his mother—with dreamy interest.

In a corner of the room was another couch, not occupied then; and this, with a wooden shelf, fastened into a recess formed by the projecting brickwork of a chimney, and a rusty grate, in which lingered a spark or two from some dying embers, completed the inventory of the chamber.

“Past ten o’clock, and a stormy night!” The hoarse voice of the watchman was faintly heard from the pavement below, mingling with the pattering of the sleet, and the moaning of the wind, and the rattling of loose tiles overhead; when the door was pushed open, and a tall female figure, wrapped in a faded and ragged red cloak, and with her head

partially covered with a battered bonnet, which had once been black, stumbled heavily in, and threw herself on the unoccupied chair.

"Is it working ye are again at this time of night, Ellen?" she demanded, in a tone of rough sympathy. "Ye'll work yer fingers to the bone, darling; and your cough so bad."

The young woman spread out her hand. "There is not far to get to the bone," she said passionately; "and I have not much more to do."

"And, may be, ye'll not tell what ye are after making out of that bit of flannel? Sure!" she ejaculated, lifting her hands in horror, as the other unfolded the garment on which she had previously bestowed some hours of nightly labour, and held it up in the dim light, "it isn't a——"

"Hush!" exclaimed the young mother hastily; "Roland is awake."

"Ye tould me it was something for yourself, Ellen," whispered the woman.

"It *is* for myself, Mrs. Magrath; and it will not be long before I have to wear it. You know that."

"Ye'll hould your tongue about that, Ellen," said the woman. "Ye shut yourself up here from morning to night, darling, and niver taste a bit of fresh air, and 'tis starving yourself ye are."

"I am very ill, Peggy, and you know it," said the young woman; "and, if it wasn't for the boy, I wouldn't care how soon it is all over. There's rest enough where I am going—rest for the body, at least;" and Ellen folded her arms over the table, and,

leaning her head upon them, while her long dark hair concealed her face, sobbed loudly.

The older woman meanwhile had risen, and divested herself of her dripping bonnet and cloak. In person she was a perfect contrast to her companion ; she was above the ordinary height, and her whole appearance was masculine. Her arms, bare to the elbow, were red, large, and muscular ; and her face, which was broad and coarse, was not improved in its aspect by a profusion of red frowsy hair which covered her forehead.

"You're a foolish little darling," she replied, in a softened voice ; "ye ought to have more spurrit than to care three turns of a straw for the good-for-nothing——"

"Don't, don't !" exclaimed the young mother, in a smothered tone ; "I can't bear it, Mrs. Magrath."

"Well, then, I won't spake another word about it," said Peggy : "but ye'll promise not to take on so. And ae for your bit of a cough, Ellen, ye'll take some of my purscription—that's a word I larn't to-day of the docthor's wife."

"I don't want any medicine," said the young mother, without raising her head ; "it isn't medicine that will cure a broken heart ; and the cough—that's only a symptom of what is going on within. Look !" and, without otherwise moving her position, she withdrew one arm from under her face, and held up a handkerchief to the flickering light.

Once more Peggy Magrath uttered a cry of horror. "Is it blood ye have been coughing up like that—and not to tell me !"



MY FIRST RECOLLECTIONS.

"It only came on to-day," said the younger female; "but I have long known what was coming. It won't last much longer, Peggy."

While this conversation was going on, the older woman, having reseated herself by the side of her companion, had been emptying what must have been a capacious pair of pockets, of some portion of their contents, consisting principally of what persons in her condition generally call "broken victuals." There were also two or three long ends of partially consumed candles, a lump of yellow soap, and a stone-ware bottle which had probably once contained ink; but from which, after extracting the cork with her teeth, she now poured out a portion of translucent and colourless liquid into a broken wine-glass which she had reached from the shelf.

"Drink it off, darling," she said, holding the glass to her companion; "'tis something betther nor the nasty doctor's stuff, that niver does no good. It'll warm ye, dear."

The young woman raised herself from her melancholy posture; but she refused the offered cordial. "You must not tempt me, Mrs. Magrath," she said mournfully. "I am low enough and miserable enough, and I am tempted often enough, I believe, to drown my senses in gin; but I dare not do it: I cannot forget what I was. You'll not tempt me, Peggy." She said this imploringly.

"What is it ye'd make me out to be, Ellen?" demanded Mrs. Magrath, half reproachfully, after swallowing the rejected dram at a single gulp. "D'ye

think I'd offer it ye, if I didn't know it'd do ye good, darling ? ”

“ You are very good—very, very kind, Peggy. If it had not been for you, when I——” and, leaving the sentence unfinished, the young woman broke into painful lamentations, which she endeavoured to stifle by laying her face on the bosom of her comforter, who, as a mother would a child, placed her arms round her, and tenderly hushed her.

“ Whist, then, whist, darling : don't take on so : think of little Roland ; he'll be the man yet ; and there's betther loock in store for ye, for all that's past an' gone.”

“ Not for me, Mrs. Magrath,” said the young mother, with more composure, relieving her friend of her light weight. “ You know that ; you know that I am doomed ; but, Peggy, when I am gone, oh, you'll——” and her voice sunk into a tremulous whisper.

“ I'll niver forget the promise, darling ; and bitter woe upon him that has brought ye and the boy to have no betther friend than Peggy Magrath ; but she'll niver desave nor desart ye.”

“ Don't wish him evil, Peggy,” pleaded the young mourner ; “ *I* cannot do so—I that have the most reason. There are times when I can pray for him, and *almost* forgive him all he has done. He is my husband.”

“ Ye're half an angel already, Ellen,” said the other ; “ and I'll not mintion his name again ; but ye're all in a thremble : ye have not wanted a meal to-day, darling ? ”

"We have not wanted food, Peggy," said the young mother.

"But a thrifle of mate," said the charwoman—for such, by profession, was Peggy Magrath—"a thrifle of mate, tendher and juicy." While speaking, she rose from her seat and spread out her treasures on the table, lighting also one of her candle-ends and fixing it in the neck of a bottle—the fellow to that which held her cordial. "Tendher and juicy," she repeated. "I brought away my supper, darling, to ate it at home, as ye needn't be misdoubting."

The young mother refused, however, to partake of her friend's dainties: she had no appetite, she said. "I have no business to ask questions, Peggy," she added, after a short silence; "but—but, if you are allowed so much food for supper——"

"Ellen, darling," said the woman, demurely, "if ye ax no questions, ye'll have no stories tould."

"And then the candles and soap, Peggy?" continued the younger woman, laying her hand kindly on the washerwoman's arm, and looking timidly into her face.

"Aisy, then, darling; if ye look at me in that way, I'll niver be able to tell ye: sure them's my parquisites; and little enough."

"But, Peggy," rejoined the young mother, with a tremulous voice, "if my poor, poor boy—poor Roland, should have no one to teach him and care for him—oh! Mrs. Magrath, will you promise, promise, promise that you will try and keep him honest?" She said this very earnestly.

The elder woman burst into tears. "I'll think ye're looking down upon me, Ellen," she sobbed; "and—yes, I'll give ye my promise, darling: but niver fear, little Roland will find a betther purtector than Peggy Magrath."

The young mother shook her head mournfully.

"I tell ye, yes, darling; and now ye'll tell me again —" Her voice was lost in a whisper; and for some minutes, amidst the turmoil of the storm without, the two women communed together very earnestly, but in a tone so low and guarded that no intelligible sounds reached the couch where the boy lay, still awake.

"I've got it all in my mimory now, Ellen, and it'll niver rub out. And now, darling, ye'll put that ugly work out of sight and out of mind; for it'll be a long day before ye want it: and ye'll pluck up your spurrits, dear; and I'll look in at the docthor's to-morrow and get some stuff for that nasty cough, that maybe will set ye up again, Ellen; and—but Ellen, darling, what's come o'er ye, child?" she exclaimed, in alarm. "Is it fainting ye are?"

It was time to ask this, for the countenance of the young mother had gradually assumed the pallor of death, and she was sinking to the floor; when the other caught her, and, lifting her in her strong arms, bore her to the unoccupied couch.

"Och! ahone!" she ejaculated; "if she isn't dying!"

The boy sprang from his bed, and with a loud cry of distress ran across the room, and threw himself

upon the insensible body ; while Mrs. Magrath hastily uncorked her bottle again, and poured some of its contents into Ellen's mouth. Either the application was successful, or the cry of distress from the child roused the mother from her temporary unconsciousness. A few minutes later she was assisted by her fellow lodger to her own couch, and was laid gently down, closely clasping her weeping and affrighted Roland in her arms, while poor Peggy robbed herself of her own bed-covering to add to the comfort of the unhappy pair.

"I'll put this out of sight, any way," muttered Mrs. Magrath to herself, after performing that charitable action, and rolling up, with a look of disgust, the garment on which the young mother had been employed, and throwing over it her faded cloak. "To think of a sinsible craytur like Ellen Leigh makin' her own shroud!" she ejaculated. She then sat down by the bedside, and soon sank off into a heavy doze.

Meanwhile, and through the remainder of the night, the storm did not cease to beat with violence against the crazy roof and walls and broken window of the attic.

This, reader, is the first scene in my history, which succeeding events indelibly impressed on my memory ; —for I am Roland Leigh.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECOND SCENE.—I AM MOTHERLESS.

BEFORE I proceed with my story—which, notwithstanding some inconveniences attaching to this style of narrative, I shall henceforth carry on in the first person—I must be allowed a few lines of explanatory digression.

I had never known any other home than that which I have partially described, nor any other companions than my mother and Mrs. Magrath. I was observant enough to know that, in some respects, there was much difference between these two solitary females; but in one particular they resembled each other, namely, in their kindness to me.

The calling of Mrs. Magrath I have already disclosed; my mother earned her bread as a needle-woman. As this was at a time when needle-work was probably a more profitable employment than it has since been or is now, I can only account for the constant grinding poverty under which my mother laboured, by supposing, first, that she was an indifferent hand at her business, or, secondly, that from ill-health, or some other cause, she was often unoccupied. That this was the case, indeed, I know; and I remember that on these days of languor or enforced idleness, she had made some attempts to teach me to read from a torn and dirty spelling-book; but with little success, I

fear. At any rate, what I thus attained slipped out of my mind, and a few years afterwards I had to recommence my alphabetical toils.

I had at that time no opportunities of comparing my mother with others in her own position, for, as I have said, I knew no one besides her and Peggy Magrath; but, as I now remember her, I am convinced, apart from other grounds of certainty, that my mother was more refined in her manners, as well as better educated, than the majority of her neighbours. I know, also, that when compelled to descend from her attic, and pass into the street, she shrank from communication with those of her own sex—who would have claimed intercourse with her by the freemasonry of a common poverty—and hurried on as though fearful of being recognised or noticed; and that she trembled if only casually addressed by any of the other sex. But these excursions—on which I uniformly accompanied my mother—were very rare; for the good-natured Mrs. Magrath was the usual medium of communication between her and her employers, and was also the invariable and trusty purchaser of the few necessities of life which interposed between us and starvation.

It will not be supposed that, as a child of five years old or thereabouts, I had studied these peculiarities, or even that I knew them as peculiarities; but I recollected them in after years, and I remember them now.

From this digression I return to take up the thread of my history.

A few gleams of pale, feeble sunshine were stealing in through the window and chinks of our poor lodging when I woke on the following morning. The storm had passed away. The scene within was changed also. To my surprise, I found myself on the mattress of our fellow-lodger, while she was standing by my mother's bedside, sobbing loudly. There were other footsteps in the room, and unaccustomed voices: they proceeded from a woman whom I knew to be the landlady of the house, and a stout man in a dark cloak, whom I had never before seen.

My heart throbbed with dread while I listened to the following conversation:—

“—— Not the least use in the world, I tell you. It was the most foolish thing in the world to send for me—at this time of day too, after I had been up all night: I tell you the woman can't last six hours longer.”

“But what am I to do, doctor? It is a very awkward thing, you see, to have a corpse in the house, and nobody to bury it. Couldn't she bear moving to the workhouse before she goes off?”

“The workhouse, ma'am? The woman would die before you could get her down stairs.”

“Is it the workhouse, Mrs. Crane, ye're spaking of?” said my mother's only friend, turning round and facing her landlady with an indignant countenance; “ye needn't think of it, ma'am.”

“Hoity-toity!” exclaimed Mrs. Crane, contemptuously; “and who is to hinder it, Mrs. Peggy Magrath, if I chose to give the word? And who is

to hinder my telling of you to follow her into the street at my bidding, Mrs. Magrath?"

"Silence! hush! good women, both," said the doctor, reprovingly. "The poor woman is sensible yet, and you disturb her with your untimely clamour;" and in truth at this moment there was a slight movement of the bed-clothes under which my mother lay, and a feeble moan escaped her lips, coupled, as I thought, with my name. I could restrain no longer, but, slipping quietly off my mattress, I crept timidly to my mother's side.

"Mother! mother!"—the cry burst from my full heart.

She heard me, and her half-closed eyes opened upon me. With a strong, last effort, she half raised herself from the bolster, and held out her arms. In another moment I was nestling beside her, and she took me to her bosom, wound her arms round me, and kissed me passionately.

It seemed as though this unexpected scene silenced for the time the awakened animosity of the two female attendants; but when my mother sunk back exhausted, and I was gently withdrawn from her embrace—that last embrace—by kind-hearted Peggy Magrath, the angry conference was resumed.

"And what's to become of the brat when his mother's dead?" demanded Mrs. Crane: *he'll* go to the workhouse, at any rate."

"Roland Leigh isn't going to the workhouse, ma'am," responded Peggy. "Ye'll plase to remimber, Mrs. Crane, that this is my lawful rinted room, and a purty

room it is for half-a-crown a week : and if ye're not ashamed of it, Peggy Magrath is ; but as long as yer rint's paid, ma'am, ye've no right to be setting fut in it without my lave, ma'am, ordering this an' that, an' calling ill names."

"What for, then, did you call me out of my warm bed, Mrs. Magrath?" Mrs. Crane wished to know ; "begging and praying me to come up to you without a moment's loss of time ? And what for did you make me send my man off express for the doctor ? You'll please to answer me that, ma'am."

"Just because I thought ye might have the heart of a faymale in your buzzum, Mrs. Crane ; but sorra a one there seems to be."

Once more the doctor interposed, and persuaded the irritated Mrs. Crane to leave the room ; and this being accomplished, Peggy seated herself by my mother's bed, and, rocking herself on the chair, broke out into fresh sobs.

"This is a bad job, Mrs. Magrath," said the doctor, commiseratingly. "Has the poor young woman no friends in London ?"

"No friends but Peggy Magrath," groaned the charwoman.

"And very poor, of course ?"

"Ye may say that, doethor ; but if you can save her life, ye needn't fear being a loser for the medicine : I'll work it out."

"Pooh, pooh !" said the doctor ; "do you think I should let a poor creature die for want of medicine, if medicine could do any good ? But the young woman is going

very fast ; she is beyond the reach of skill : there is internal hemorrhage."

"Is it a broken heart ye mane, docthor?" sobbed poor Peggy.

"Ah, something like it, at any rate. Raise her head a little, Mrs. Magrath ; she will go off easier," he added.

Peggy obeyed ; and then they both stood watching the convulsive, painful heavings and strivings for breath of my poor mother ; while I, shrinking with terror, sat crouching in a corner crying silently.

"I can do nothing," repeated the doctor, putting on his hat. "By the way, is the poor young woman a Roman Catholic, like yourself?"

Peggy shook her head.

"Ah, well, it is of no consequence : if she had been, I should have recommended your getting the priest to her as soon as possible, that's all;" and he left the room.

"She tould me she would'nt have the praste," muttered Mrs. Magrath to herself ; "and may be he'd only curse her for a heretic if——"

The soliloquy was interrupted by a gurgling, choking sound from my mother, who threw up her arms, half raised herself, and then fell heavily back upon the bed. Peggy sprang forward to her assistance ; but the last struggle was over, and I was motherless, though I knew it not.

A few days later, and I looked for the last time on my mother's countenance. She was in her coffin—a parish coffin ; and habited in the shroud—that

mysterious garment—worked with her own fingers. Hand in hand with Peggy Magrath, I followed her to her resting-place, in a dreary, dank, London graveyard ; and then I *knew* that I was motherless.

CHAPTER III.

A CHANGE OF QUARTERS, AND WHY.

THE sorrows of childhood are not generally permanent ; or if the scar remains, the wound soon heals, and the pain is gone. Before many weeks had passed away, I had almost ceased to mourn my loss, which, great as it was, brought with it, to my mind, one or two alleviations. In the first place, I had more personal liberty. Instead of being cooped up in our attic from morning to night, often shivering with cold, if not pinched with hunger, I was permitted, in the absence of Mrs. Magrath, to roam at my will and pleasure in the neighbouring lanes and courts ; and to play, squabble, and fight with the ragged, dirty urchins with which they swarmed—myself as ragged and dirty as the most neglected of them all ; for cleanliness was not one of poor Peggy's virtues. Then, in the second place, under the *régime* of my protectress, I was better fed than I had been under that of my mother, who had always forbidden my sharing the charwoman's "parquises," whatever might be the meaning of that term—and I soon guessed its meaning. Of course, I

had no such restrictions now, and Peggy crammed me to my heart's content.

Meanwhile, the quarrel between her and her landlady had been apparently made up ; at any rate, the attic was retained for our sole use : but an event occurred which caused it to blaze up afresh.

It was not very long after my mother's death, that I was one day playing in the alley, when an unlucky stone thrown by my hand broke a pane of glass in the shop window of Mrs. Crane, who, in the basement story of her lodging-house, carried on the business of dealer in marine stores ; and as I was standing aghast at the mischief thus wrought, I found myself suddenly in the grasp of that angry lady, who boxed my ears very lustily, and added words of awful threatening, which sent me, roaring with pain and quaking with fear, to the refuge of our upper room.

Here I was found by Mrs. Magrath on her return from her day's occupation, still trembling and sobbing, and ready enough to pour out my sorrows into her compassionate ears. The next minute I was in her strong arms, and she descended the rotten stairs with hot and fiery haste.

"Is it bateing my darling ye have been, ma'am?" she demanded, in a stern voice, as she confronted her landlady, who turned slightly pale at the rencontre ; for she was no match for my nurse, either in strength of arm or volubility.

"And if I did give him a cuff, she began, apologetically, "didn't he break my window? And who's to pay for that, Mrs. Magrath?"

I had never before seen Peggy Magrath in what she afterwards called a warm and comfortable passion, and only once afterwards.

Setting me down at her feet, and putting her arms a-kimbo, she commenced a volley of objurgations, mingled with direful menaces and scornful epithets, which quickly wrought their effect upon her antagonist, and, in another moment, a strife of tongues had commenced, which, though it dwells in my memory, it would be vain, if it were desirable, for me to attempt to describe. From words the quarrel soon proceeded to personal violence.

"I'll tache ye, ye ill-nurthered thing, to lay yer hand on innocent childher another time," shouted Peggy, grasping the head-dress of Mrs. Crane, and dragging her, shrieking, into the alley ; and then arose a tumult of shouts, laughter, oaths, trampling of feet, heavy blows, howls of pain, pantings, screams, and threats of dreadful vengeance.

For a few minutes I sat stupified ; but, alas ! young as I was, my experience of the byways of a great city had already familiarised me with scenes of violence. From the window of our attic I had many times looked down on brutal combats in the alley below ; and my ears had drank in the polluted language of London blackguardism ; and that which had evidently caused my mother painful disgust, had, to me, become a source of excitement, if not of secret delight. Now, however, my fears were aroused for the safety of my nurse ; and, starting to my feet, I ran distractedly into the open air, calling her by name, with all the strength of my feeble lungs.

Already a mob had collected round the combatants. From every house in the alley delighted spectators were pouring forth : men in dirty shirt-sleeves, with begrimed hands and faces ; women in every degree of disarray, with squalling infants in their arms, and in frenzied excitement, were shouting encouragement and calling out for fair play, while they pushed, jostled, and tumbled over each other to witness the battle ; windows were thrown up and lined with spectators ; and even from the housetops others were looking down with composure on the turmoil below.

None heeded me—the unconscious cause of the horrid tumult ; and, after narrowly escaping being trodden under-foot by the throng, I pushed my way into the narrow space left clear for the furious foes. The strife was over, however ; Peggy, with her masculine strength, brawny arms, and superior stature, had gained a speedy victory. But even she had not come off unscathed ; her face and arms were streaming with blood ; and on the ground, amidst the rags and tatters of clothing which the combatants had torn from each other in the fierce fray, were several locks of her own red hair.

But Peggy's triumphant spirit lifted her above the sense of bodily pain. Catching me once more in her arms, and casting a contemptuous glance at her prostrate foe, she looked round on the crowd, demanding if anybody else there wanted a "bateing" ; and, receiving no reply save a hilarious burst of laughter, she marched off in stern dignity.

"She'll not bate ye again, honey," said she, when she

had reached her room, and was bathing her scarred face with copious libations of her "cordial"; "but we must lave this, anyhow; for I wouldn't demane meself by slaping another night under the roof of the crayther."

And, in effect, before night had closed in, Mrs. Magrath had shifted her quarters from —— Alley to a neighbouring court, known as "Whiskers' Rents"—a locality which I shall presently describe.

CHAPTER IV.

MY FIRST THEFT.—MRS. MAGRATH FINDS SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.—WHISKERS' RENTS DESCRIBED.

A YEAR or more had passed away, and the memory of my mother had become more and more faint. Meanwhile I had grown and strengthened in body, while my mind, undisciplined and neglected, was becoming precociously active. If Peggy Magrath had been a better guide and protectress than it is reasonable to suppose her to have been, she could scarcely have severed me from those evil communications which corrupt good manners; for her occupation compelled her absence from our lodging through the greater part of almost every day, and the moral instructions of an occasional evening's intercourse would have gone but a little way towards counteracting the contaminating influence of the society into which I was daily cast.

But, in truth, Mrs. Magrath had few moral instructions to inculcate. She was intensely ignorant

and superstitious ; and even her good qualities were beclouded and overcast by an equal or a greater number of besetting vices. Thus, she was industrious ; and, because of her superior strength and willingness, and her consequent ability to get through a hard day's work, she had always employment enough ; but she was, if not positively intemperate in her habits, certainly not a pattern of abstinence or even of sobriety. She was affectionate and grateful for kindness received ; but, as I have just shown, she was prompt and fierce in her resentment. Then, she was benevolently considerate. From a poor, struggling, many-children'd tradesman she would have scorned so dirty an action, as she would have called it, as to abstract a single farthing's-worth of consumable property, while willingly giving hour after hour of overwork without extra payment. But, on the other hand, with regard to her richer employers, she looked upon "parquises" as a kind of lawful spoiling of the enemy, or a tax upon property which she was justified in levying.

And let me do Mrs. Magrath the justice to say, that she was earnestly desirous of being faithful to the promises she had made to my mother. On one occasion, for instance, she caught me in the act of devouring a rosy-cheeked apple, and requested to know where I had obtained it.

Secure, as I thought, of her approbation, I replied that it was a "parquise."

"A parquise ! what d'ye mane ?" demanded Mrs. Magrath.

"Old Mother Green gave me a halfpenny to mind her stall while she went home," I explained; "and she was gone such a precious long time."

"And the halfpenny—where's the halfpenny, Roland?"

I pulled it out of my pocket and showed it to her.

"And ye stowle the apple, thin?" shouted Peggy, in a tone that made me tremble, unused though I was to her anger. "Ye stowle it, did ye?—you that I promised to keep honest!" and she wrested the apple from my grasp. "An' what'll yer mother say when she looks down and sees ye growing up to be a thafe, Roland Leigh? Ye may well cry, ye unlooky one!" she went on, as my tears began to flow; "but ye'll not get off in that way, my man; ye must come with me this instant;" and, heedless of the terror her words excited, she laid hold on me with her strong hand and hurried me into the court. Nor did she stop in her progress till we reached the apple-stall, the contents of which had excited my cupidity.

Her errand was soon explained, and, having delivered up the mutilated apple, she insisted on my restoring the halfpenny, which she declared I had forfeited by my flagrant breach of trust. Nor was this all; for, despite the expostulations of the good-natured apple-woman, and amidst the jeers of the bystanders she compelled me to kneel before the feet of the injured Mrs. Green, and beg pardon for the offence I had committed, promising solemnly to keep my hands in future from picking and stealing. This done, we marched back again in silence; and it was not till



RESTITUTION.

we had reached our chamber, and Peggy had had recourse to her never-failing cordial, that she regained her equanimity and opened her lips in speech ; while I, stung with mortification, sat down sulkily on the floor.

“Roland Leigh,” said Mrs. Magrath slowly and impressively, “ye niver towld me a lie ; an’ now I ax ye, is this the first time ye iver stowle ?”

I answered, and answered truly, that it was ; and that I should not have taken the apple that day if Sloppy Stevens had not put it into my head.

“I belave ye, darling,” said my nurse in a softened tone ; “the more by token that Sloppy Stevens is a bould, bad boy, without respict or riverince for young or ould. But, sorra on ye, ye’ll come to be as bould and bad as he, if ye take him for yer patthorn. An’ I promised yer poor mother I’d keep ye honest, I did,” she continued, wiping her eyes ; “an’ if I made ye do what I did this day, it was because I didn’t forget the promise.”

My sullenness was gone at sight of her tears ; she had been kind to me, and I knew it, though I did not then know how much I owed to her disinterested affection. I crept timidly to her side and put my arm round her neck. “I’ll never do it again, Peggy,” I sobbed ; “and I will be honest, I will.”

“May ye be kept in that mind for iver an’ iver. Amin,” said Mrs. Magrath, returning my embrace ; and so the matter ended : but it was long before the impression it left on my mind was even weakened.

From that day a change, perceptible even to me,

came over my protectress. Her mind seemed occupied with big and mighty thoughts; and she frequently dropped mysterious hints, which evidently had reference to myself and some impending change in my circumstances. Sometimes these intimations took the form of loud and sorrowful anticipations of having to part with me; but oftener they were manifested in less demonstrative but deeper exultations at the good luck in store for me.

I observed too that, gradually, my wardrobe was reformed, and enlarged, so that eventually I attained to the dignity of a Sunday "shute," as Peggy called it; which, one article after another, she purchased for me at an old clothes' shop in the neighbourhood. This was a work of time, however; and it was attended with one inconvenience on which my kind-hearted nurse had not calculated. In fact, she forgot that, while her limited means were slowly accumulating, I was more rapidly growing; so that the garment she bought for me in January or July—the month is immaterial—and which fitted, according to the Jew dealer's averment, as well as if it had been made for me, and which, moreover, was laid carefully aside until the entire equipment of my person was complete—was tight, even to bursting, nearly a year afterwards. At last, indeed, Peggy became aware of this obvious fact; and the last purchase, which completed my outfit, was made with a prudent foresight respecting the future. But this served only to aggravate my *outré* appearance, when, for the first time, I put on my "shute": my lower extremities being "cribbed, cabined, and confined" in a garment

or garments so excessively and painfully small (but were they not "small clothes"?) that the wonder was, first, how I had ever got into them; and, secondly, how I was ever to get out of them; while the upper and nobler part of my body was smothered and concealed in a coat which certainly would allow for my growing. I was proud of my appearance, however; and so was Peggy, who, after turning me round and round, muttered to herself—"They'll be sure to take kindly to him now."

"Who will be, Peggy?" I ventured to ask; and received in response the oracular sentence which I had more than once heard before from her lips, "Ye'll ax no questions, honey, an' thin ye'll have no stories tould;" adding, "an' now ye'll take off the new shute, Roland; for ye're not to wear it yet awhile."

Again, I noticed that, whereas Mrs. Magrath had in former times been profoundly indifferent to society in general, and had kept at arm's length—probably for my mother's sake and mine—even her own country folk, she now began to court the company of stragglers, such, at least, as had travelled in the country. And it happened that the house in which we lodged was especially favourable for such companionship. Let me describe it.

It was a large house, three stories high, and had been at one time—but it must have been long, long ago—a dwelling of some consideration. Even in its old age it retained vestiges of former respectability, if not magnificence, in its broad staircase, with curiously turned and massive banisters (such portions as remained),

antique carved wainscotings, and broad cornices ; but the old house was wofully dilapidated and hastening to decay. The walls were full of gaping cracks, and leaned forward frowningly and threateningly upon the narrow court—so threateningly, that passers-by were wont to cast a timid glance upward, and hasten on, as though fearful of being suddenly buried in their fall. The floors of the upper rooms had declined so much from the horizontal, that it was uphill work to travel from the doorways to the wide cavernous fireplaces. I use the words doorways and fireplaces advisedly, for the greater number of the doors, and the whole of the grates, had long since disappeared. The joists of the building were loose and ruinous ; and the rafters overhead, in the garrets, were bent with old age and the weight of tiles into the form of a bow, and some of them were crumbling into dust with rottenness ; so that it was marvellous how the whole roof of the poor old house had not, years ago, fallen in with a terrible crash.

So much for the material points of this, the principal house in Whiskers' Rents. Incidentally, it was full of filth and uncleanness. From cellar to attic, one thick coating of dark sticky moisture clung to its wainscoted walls ; its floors were hidden with a still thicker carpeting of London slime, trodden by innumerable feet into the consistency of sun-baked clay ; and the smoke of past generations of fires had covered what remained of its ceilings with blackness approaching to ebony. I say nothing of windows which would not open and windows which would not shut, rendered

semi-opaque with dirt where glass remained, and picturesque by the variety of contrivances for keeping out wind and rain, as well as sunshine, where glass was gone.

A front room on the ground floor of this "desirable property" was the home and refuge of its owner, who, like a bloated spider, never travelled beyond the limits of his web. A back garret, the smallest and most wretched of all, was Peggy Magrath's home and mine. But between these two extremes was a floating population, equalling if not exceeding in number that of a small country village. It varied, however: in summer, we were comparatively deserted. London then—our London—was out of town. It was when fashionable London was at its fullest, that our population also began to flow in with a full tide. *Then*, travelling tinkers, tramping beggars, rag collectors, wandering minstrels, owners and trainers of dancing dogs, itinerant dealers in small wares, and so forth, who had closed their summer provincial business; hop-pickers from Kent and Sussex, and reapers from the midland counties and counties still further north, whose home was London—if peripatetic and occasional workers can be said to have a home anywhere—came thronging in to Whiskers' Rents, to hibernate in vicious idleness, or to pick up the scanty subsistence which the country would no longer yield.

To this class of the population—nomadic in their habits and by inclination, and ingenious in their modes of levying contributions on other classes, whom they looked upon as natural foes—"Whiskers" was a harbour

of refuge. In their wanderings, their thoughts turned fondly towards "Whiskers"; in their casual meetings they talked, in bated breath, about "Whiskers"; and at their parting they drank to a merry re-union at "Whiskers." Bets were to be settled, marriages to be celebrated, and disputes to be adjusted, at "Whiskers."

Within the radius of a mile or less from Whiskers' Rents, taking that as the centre of a circle, were lordly dwellings, a regal palace, a glorious cathedral abbey, churches, chapels, houses of parliament, magnificent streets, shops filled with luxuries: by day, streams of wealth and splendour rolled on; and by night, brilliant gleams of light from the abodes of fashion, danced in the atmosphere round about "Whiskers." Legislators and high dignitaries and powers held their levées and assembled their admirers within an easy reach of "Whiskers"; but Whiskers' Rents was a *terra incognita*, an unknown country; it was inclosed within a maze of streets and lanes; its approaches were perfectly known only to the initiated; and he would have been a bold man who, in the performance of some perilous duty, should penetrate the outer shell which hemmed and bound it in. Crime lay there concealed; vice festered there; poverty nestled there; ignorance triumphed there; and no man cared, or seemed to care. Like the priest and the Levite in the Saviour's parable, those from whom better things might have been expected, "passed by on the other side."

I said that, among other changes which were observable at this time in Peggy Magrath, was that she began to court the society of her fellow-lodgers at

“Whiskers.” She was discriminate, however, in her choice. It seemed as though all new comers (and they were numberless) were subjected to some uniform inquiry ; and, this answered, her interest, in most cases, suddenly subsided, and further intercourse was dropped. Occasionally, however, her countenance kindled to animation, and the introductory question led to others. Then, a look of disappointment beclouded her features, and her inquiries ceased.

All this was inexplicable to me ; nor did Peggy choose to enlighten my ignorance : at length, however, a little light broke in upon my mind.

The conversations I have hinted at were generally carried on in the court below, or on the broad landing places or stairs of our lodging-house ; but, on one occasion, the intelligence gained by Mrs. Magrath arrived at so satisfactory a point that she enticed the intelligencer, an old ballad-singer and vender of last dying speeches, to the solitude of her remote attic, with the promise of a glass of cordial to warm his “poor old heart.”

“An’ so ye’ve thravelled”—this to her guest :—
“ye’ll go to slape, darling, an’ shut up your eyes, while I’m spaking to this good gintleman”—this to me, who was in bed. Obediently, I closed my eyes, but not my ears.

“An’ so ye’ve thravelled in——?”

“In e’en a’most every county and sheer in England, ma’am, as I told you—Yorkshire, Lancashire, Stafford, Warwick, Gloucester, Herefordshire, Oxford, Bedford, Hertford. I’ve been tramping it forty years and more

—fifty, for what I know, here and there and up and down. Here's wishing your good health, ma'am," raising the glass to his lips, as I judged by the hearty smack that followed, "and may you never know what it is to want it."

"Thankye," said Peggy; "an' ye know the place I was axing ye about?"

"Place and people, ma'am, high and low," said the traveller; "leastways, I know'd 'em once. I haven't been near that part of the country nigh upon four year."

"An' ye, may-be, know ——?" here Peggy lowered her voice, and the name she whispered escaped me.

"You mean him as they call the Squire? he what lives at the white house with the big farm-yard afore it, and owns most of the land there-away?" demanded the old man.

"Ye hear that, Roland!—a squire to yer grand——" she began, and then suddenly stopped short with—"Sorrow to my tongue, when I promised that I wouldn't brathe a word in his ear, good or bad, till ——." This was in a low tone of self-communing; but Peggy's asides were generally audible enough. "An' what should I be waking him for?" she added.

"Eh! what's up now?" exclaimed the old traveller, with some animation; "you don't mean that:" and, opening my eyes for a half glance, I perceived that he was nodding and pointing significantly towards me.

"May be yes, and may be no," replied Mrs. Magrath; "but ye'll tell me one thing more"—she looked cautiously round, but I was too quick for her,

and my eyes were again fast shut—"the Squire had a daughter——"

"As run away and married him as called hisself Captain Leigh——"

"Hush, whish!" whispered Peggy, cautiously. "Go on; but stop—another dhrop first;" and, by the clink of the lip of her bottle against the edge of the broken wine-glass, I could tell, without opening my eyes, that her hand shook with excitement.

"—— called hisself Captain Leigh," continued the ballad-singer; "and mayhap he was, and mayhap he wasn't; but, captain or no captain, it was a bad match for the gal."

"Ye may say that!" interjected Peggy, with a sigh.

"And when he'd spent all her money, which wasn't long first, and run away and left her to starve——"

"Ye needn't tell me about that," said Peggy; "didn't I hear the story from her own beautiful lips, the ill-treated crayther? But, Roland Leigh, is it waping ye are? What ails ye, thin?" she exclaimed, suddenly turning to me, and holding the candle close to my face.

Yes, tears were coursing down my cheeks in a full current. I had eagerly drunk in the words I had heard; that they related to me and my parentage was plain; and the image of my mother rose up in my memory.

What more I might have heard but for this involuntary burst of passion, I do not know; for Peggy's conference with the ballad-singer was for that time closed. They met again afterwards; but care

was taken that I should overhear no more of their conversations ; and, in a short time, Mrs. Magrath relapsed into her former state of isolation.

Winter passed away, and spring ; and, with the latest snows, the overflowing population of Whiskers' Rents began to melt away also. It was then that the last and finishing purchase of my "Sunday shute" was made ; and then, too, the secret which had lain concealed in Mrs. Magrath's bosom nearly oozed out in the following fashion :—

"Ye'd like to thravel in the counthry, darling?" said she one evening, after her return from a hard day's work.

"If you are going, Peggy, I'd like to go with you," said I.

"Hear to him ! as if I'd sind him out on his thravels alone !" said she.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"That's a saycret," said she.

"I know. You are going to look out for my——"

"Whist !" said Peggy, "an' I'll tell ye a sthory. Oncet upon a time there was a darling young lady lived all alone in a grand house, along wid her father an' two shisters, an' a power of sarvants ; an' she was as happy as the days was long——"

"That was my mother," said I, quickly.

"Only to think of that, now !" exclaimed Mrs. Magrath ; "he's found it out ; and I promised I wouldn't. An' I'm thinking, darling, it's time ye went to bed ; for we'll start on our thravels to-morrow."

"Do, do tell me all about it, Peggy !" I cried ; but she

was inexorable ; and, for the second time, I was balked of hearing as much as Mrs. Magrath knew of my mother's history.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPEDITION OF GREAT PROMISE.

It was early on a June morning, between two and three years after the date of my mother's death, that, hand in hand with Peggy Magrath, I found myself on a broad turnpike road, with London in the background, and a widening prospect of green hills and beautiful hedgerows before us. To me all was new. I had never before been—or I never remembered having been—beyond the din of the great city ; and the bright sunshine, the singing of birds over-head and around, the rustling of foliage in the brisk breeze which fanned our cheeks, and even the curious, inquisitive looks of the passengers who were astir and on the road, which greeted our advent into the country, were all ingredients in that new pleasure which broke in upon my mind then.

I have witnessed many lovely scenes since that day—have, under far different circumstances, contemplated the beauties of creation with rapturous and more enlightened joy ; but the memory of those fresh feelings of a new and unsuspected capacity for delight, has never been effaced.

And so I strode on cheerily, darting away every

now and then, as a new form of beauty in some common wayside flower caught my eye, and returning with it in triumph to the side of my protectress.

"Aisy, darling!" she said, when for the twentieth time I had made one of these short excursions; "ye'll wear yer feet off yer legs, an' what'll ye do thin? Ye'll niver get there at all at all, if ye pick up ivery weed ye come to."

"Never get where, Peggy?" I wished to know.

"Ye'll ax no questions, Roland, and thin ye'll have no stories tould," said Mrs. Magrath, using her accustomed formula; "ye'll know all about it when it is convanient;" and she marched on in determined and resolute silence.

But, in truth, how far we had to travel, towards what termination, and what provisions Peggy had made for the journey, were questions which gave me very little concern. I had, it is true, a faint and floating idea that the journey was taken on my account; but I cared little for that: it was enough to me that I was entering upon a new world, and enjoying the foretaste of a glorious holiday, as I supposed. Mrs. Magrath, however, as I afterwards found, had laid her plans with commendable forethought. In her retentive memory was stored all the information she had obtained from various sources, especially from the ballad-singer, respecting the route we must take, the towns through which we should pass, and the best and cheapest lodging-houses for travellers on the way. She had also, by rigid economy, husbanded a few shillings, and by the sale of her bed, and table,

and two chairs, to her landlord, on the previous evening, added a few more to the stock for our support on the road ; and, lest she should be tempted to squander it, she had foresworn indulgence in her favourite cordial until the journey's end was reached ; and to this vow she rigidly and faithfully adhered.

She had had the precaution also to pack up a stock of food—"parquisites," perhaps—for the first day or two of our pilgrimage ; and this, with my Sunday "shute," was securely strapped on to her back under her old red cloak ; for she had wisely determined that my best clothes should not be travel-stained when our destination was reached. A happy arrangement this for me, for a reason already given.

Before bidding adieu to Whisker's Rents, we had snatched only a hasty breakfast ; and by the time we were fairly launched into the country, we were glad to open our bundle under the shade of a wide spreading tree by the roadside, and near a pool of tolerably clear water. My joy had not taken away my appetite, nor was Mrs. Magrath's impaired by her anxieties ; so we made a hearty meal, and took deep draughts from the pool out of an old tin cup which my protectress drew from her pocket ; and then we started afresh.

On and on we went, sometimes slower, sometimes faster ; now stopping to rest under some shady hedge, on the soft green sward which bordered the road, then hastening on to make up for lost time ; occasionally exchanging words with chance passengers, but more frequently uninterrupted in our progress ; every furlong, if not every few steps, opening some fresh

scene to arrest my attention. Now, it was a party of mowers in the adjoining meadows ; then, a village street, with its gable-roofed cottages, its blacksmith's forge, and its rustic-porched inn, with its huge swinging sign ; now, a flock of sheep in the road, which nearly scampered over us ; and then, a church with its grey tower and its graveyard ; and then, a farmhouse with its yard ; and then, a sparkling stream, on the banks of which I laid down to quench my thirst, without the intervention of Peggy's tin cup ; and then, fields of waving corn ; and then, a wood ; and then, at last, when my legs were dragging slowly along, and my eyes were aching, and my thoughts bewildered with these and all other sights, and I was beginning to wonder when we should get "there," and was pestering patient Mrs. Magrath with questions thereupon, which she did not choose to answer, and the sun was slowly going down, came the welcome intelligence that our day's march was nearly come to an end.

We were descending a steep hill by a narrow, winding road. A valley lay before us, through which ran a pretty river ; and beyond that, on another hill, was a small town. This was to be our resting-place ; and, having sought out, in one of its meanest streets, a small hostelry to which Peggy had been recommended before we left London, and where we found a numerous company of travellers like ourselves, I was stretched upon a bed of straw—not very clean, but I was not fastidious then—and in a short time was fast asleep.

I need not narrate, even if I could remember, all

the incidents of our subsequent pilgrimage—how we travelled on, day after day, from one town to another, through a still fairer and quieter country, sleeping at nights, sometimes in a cheap lodging-house, sometimes—which Peggy better liked—in barns or out-houses, and once, when we were benighted, under a high overhanging bank, beside a blazing fire of dead wood which we gathered from the hedges ; how, when Peggy's stock of provisions was gone, she often, without absolutely begging, contrived that a crust, or a slice of bread and butter, or a cake, should be added to the draught of skim milk, which, at farm-houses, she did not scruple to ask for, for the "poor tendher orphlin, that had nobody in the wide world to care for him but the lone widow, who sure was no kith nor kin to him at all at all ;" and how sometimes, softened it may be by my look of weariness (for after a few days my strength and spirits began to flag), a good-natured waggoner would give us a lift on the road, suffering me to nestle in the straw at the bottom of his vehicle, while Peggy watched over me with the solicitude of a mother.

Neither need I speak at large of the expedients adopted by Mrs. Magrath to lighten the toils of our long journey ; how, when we sat down to rest, she would tell me of passages in her own history, such as that she was one of a family of a round dozen of childher, born and brought up in a mud cabin in ould Oireland—blessings on the poor ould counthry !—and that she had the bad loock to marry a spalpeen of a souldier, her counthryman, when she was only a slip

of a girl, and had followed his regiment for love of him, though it was little of that article she got in return ; that in her wanderings she had crossed the big sea to Merricay, where there was terrible fighting, and where her husband was killed, and she left a lone widow before she was twenty years of age ; and that when the fighting was over, she came home with the regiment, and so forth. These communications beguiled many weary hours ; and when they were brought down to the time of her final establishment in London, and she had nothing more to tell, I coaxed her to go over it all again ; so that

“Thrice she fought her battles o’er,
And thrice she slew the slain.”

And let me not forget to record how, at other times, when I was so exhausted with our pilgrimage that, with tears in my eyes, I declared myself unable to proceed a step further, poor Peggy—forgetting her own weariness—would carry me many a mile on her strong back ; and would keep up her own spirits, and raise mine, by predictions—mysterious and oracular to me, but firmly believed by herself—of the grandeur and happiness in store for me ; how that I was on the high road to being a rare gentleman, and should have a beautiful powny to ride, and servants to wait upon me, and a grand house to live in ; and that then I should forget poor old Peggy Magrath ; but that Peggy would be content, as in duty bound, and would tramp back to London with a glad heart for me, and a sad heart for herself. All this, and more, entered my

ears as I rode on Peggy's back, or dragged along by her side ; and night after night, when our day's progress was duly reported, we slept as soundly on our poor straw beds as did ever lord or lady on bed of down.

At length we drew near, very near, to the point towards which our wanderings had tended ; and Peggy, who till then had kept up her spirits and mine too with amazing power, began to show signs of perturbation—not so much regarding the success of her plans, and the fulfilment of her hopes and predictions concerning myself, as in thinking that thenceforward the tie which had so long bound us together would be so soon finally severed.

Poor Peggy ! she had nursed me in unconscious childhood ; she had watched over my mother's dying bed ; and—in her rude and untaught manner—had stood to me in a mother's stead. That I had filled up a void in her naturally strong maternal affections, I cannot doubt ; but, so much the more, the prospect before her was one of desolateness ; and with faltering steps and a heart full to overflowing, as one evening we drew near to a village, she entered a small hostelry ; —but the remainder of this adventure must be reserved for a new chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

I LEARN MORE THAN I BEFORE KNEW OF MY MOTHER'S HISTORY.

WE entered the public house ; and Peggy, seating herself in the taproom, called for refreshments. They were brought to us by a slatternly woman, dressed in rusty black, who examined the shilling which was tendered in payment with evident suspicion, before she changed it.

" May be ye think it isn't a good one ma'am," said Mrs. Magrath. " There's more to the fore, ma'am, and ye may take your choice ;" and she emptied her little purse upon the table. Alas ! there were not many shillings left ; for, good economist as Peggy had been, her little stock of money had been woefully diminished in our journeyings since leaving London.

" Oh, it will do well enough," replied the woman, ungraciously, after testing the coin by the application of her teeth. And, having given the change, she withdrew.

There was not much in our appearance to bespeak the civility of a cross-grained hostess. Poor Peggy's faded and stained cloak and shabby headdress, together with my ragged every-day attire, which had originally been picked up in cheap pennyworths at some rag fair, and had since then seen service in the mud, and filth, and dust, and wear and tear of London

streets ; my shoeless and hatless condition—for I had travelled, by my own choice as much as for necessity, both bareheaded and barefooted ; and the dirt and dust which begrimed and beclouded our features, would have placed us, at any time or any where, in the category of houseless vagrants ; and as such, Mrs. Magrath had, throughout our pilgrimage, been contented to put up with scant courtesy, even when she had paid a full price for such accommodation as we had obtained. Now, however, it seemed desirable to her to enlist the sympathies of the woman of the house in our favour ; and the way in which she set about it showed at least some knowledge of human nature ; for presently, while we were despatching the brown bread, and hard cheese, and small beer with which we had been favoured, the landlady returned, having in her arms a sickly-looking child, and Peggy began to praise its beauty.

The mother was gratified ; and the hostess unbent and smiled graciously.

My protectress followed up the advantage she had gained ; and ere long the two women were in earnest and confidential conversation, while I gradually sunk from the bench on which I had been seated, and, laying my head in Peggy's lap, was soon fast asleep.

Whatever was the nature of the conference, it issued in our being conducted to a more inviting chamber than any we had previously occupied in our journeyings, as well as in the accommodation of a huge tub of water, with a due allowance of soap and towel ; and

before I lay down that night I could boast, at least, of having a clean skin.

In the morning I was awoke by the low crooning and broken sobs of poor Peggy, who, seated by the bedside, was vainly endeavouring to overcome her grief. And now, for the first time, she fully explained to me the object of our long journey, and gave me the following faint outlines of my mother's connection with herself, and her previous history, which I shall repeat in my own words.

It was six years ago, she said, that, returning one evening from work, she was attracted by a crowd gathered round a poor young creature who lay extended on the pavement in a fainting fit, with a child clinging to her neck, and uttering cries of fear and distress. There were on-lookers and advisers enough, Peggy said, but no helpers. "Take her to the workhouse; she seems ill," cried one. "Take her to the watch-house; she's shamming," said another. "Let her lie where she is; she'll come to presently," said a third. Meanwhile, the poor Irishwoman had knelt down by her side, and had raised her head. "Will any of ye bring a dhrink of wather to the poor crayther?" she asked.

There was a pump near, and after some delay, water was brought; and my mother—for she it was—partially revived under its application.

"Are ye far from yer home, dear?" asked Mrs. Magrath, when this was accomplished.

"Home! home?" shrieked my mother, wildly; "I have no home."

"But ye have frinds," said Peggy.

"No home, no friends, no—no food," said my mother, in a hollow voice, that told its own tale of suffering; "no food: neither my child nor I have tasted food to-day."

"Ye hear that, good Christian people!" exclaimed the compassionate Peggy, repeating the words, and looking around; but the appeal met with no response. Yes, there was one response: an elderly gentleman who had been looking on uttered words which sounded very much like—"An impostor, an impostor, quite evidently an impostor,"—and walked hastily away. There was a laugh, too, called forth by poor Peggy's earnestness and her brogue from the crowd, which began at that instant to disperse; and, in a few minutes, the indignant Irishwoman was left alone with the houseless and starving wanderers.

They had food that night, and shelter; for Peggy took them to her own poor lodging—the garret which I have elsewhere described; and thenceforward they had a home and a friend. Then, too, the young mother, with the assistance of her friend and preserver, obtained such scanty employment as enabled her to provide for her own and her child's sustenance, and to contribute her share of rent. "So you see, Roland," said Peggy, when she came to this part of the story, "she wasn't beholden to me at all at all, but just the contrary."

Two or three years later, and when my mother felt convinced that her health and strength were gradually failing, she broke through the reserve which, till then,

she had maintained, and intrusted her story to Peggy Magrath, extracting from her a promise, however, that it should not be revealed to me, after her death, until a proper time had arrived. "And sure the proper time is come now," said poor Peggy, weeping bitterly, "whin we're going to part, and maybe 'll never meet again."

"I won't go away from you, Peggy," I exclaimed, breaking into her narrative, and starting up from the bed. "I dont want to go away."

"Hush, darling! ye mustn't break my heart; 'tis all for yer good, and ye'll be a gintleman from this day forth, ye will; and it isn't fit for ye to keep in with the ould Oirish washerwoman: only if they'll let me come down and get a look at ye sometimes,—but I haven't tould ye yer mother's sthery yet;" and she continued her narrative.

It was a not uncommon tale of youthful folly, and subsequent suffering, and retribution. I have already given its prominent parts in the hints dropped by the old ballad-singer, which I have recorded; and I need only complete the outline, thus:—

My mother was the youngest child of a wealthy but uneducated farmer in——shire, and *her* mother was dead. The farmer was fond of his daughter—fond, at least, for one whose heart was set upon riches; and he had so far relaxed in his sordid habits as to send the little Ellen to a cheap boarding-school, while her elder sisters were kept at home in ignorance and household drudgery. Thence arose jealousies and alienation.

When Ellen returned from school, at the age of sixteen, with her head filled with romance and her knowledge circumscribed within the narrow bounds of some half-dozen miscalled accomplishments, imperfectly attained, to be neglected and forgotten more speedily than they were acquired, she found herself subjected to the inveterate and malignant tyranny of her untaught sisters. She was miserable.

Then came gratification to her romance, and relief to her unhappiness, in the proffered affections of a stranger; then reciprocal vows and stolen interviews; then discovery and revilings, with threats and blows; then desperation, elopement, and a stolen marriage; then disownment. But why continue this catalogue of follies and woes?

A year or two passed away, and Ellen's name was probably never mentioned at home but with imprecations. Her very place of refuge was unknown; when one day she suddenly appeared, broken down in health, deserted and abandoned by her husband, and in destitution. A child was in her arms; and for his sake she begged to be forgiven by her stern father and her sterner sisters, and to be received and sustained, if only as "a hired servant."

She was thrust from the door.

She had learned, long before this, that the man on whom she had cast herself for protection, and whose professions of love she had too readily believed, was—but let me restrain my pen, for I am writing of my father and my mother's husband. She found, however, that he had married her under a false name, because

his true name was too well known and too unsafe to be used ; that he had associates more deeply involved in guilt and more hardened than himself, and that his professed affection and his marriage was a speculation which had failed.

Yet, with a woman's wronged heart, she half believed in him still ; she knew that when he left her, it was to hide himself in London ; but she had obtained a clue to his retreat, and when denied the shelter of a father's roof and the protection of a father's arm, she directed her steps there. How she travelled that weary way, unsupported and with a nurseling in her arms, was known only to herself ; but she reached her destination at last. She did more—she searched for and found her husband ; and not till then was her cup of misery full ; for the mask was laid aside which had previously partially concealed the—but again I check my pen.

She fled from him as from a pestilence, wandering she knew not whither, till she sank exhausted on the inhospitable pavement of a London street, and found sympathy and protection in a poor and ignorant stranger.

This, told in other words and phrases, was the substance of Peggy's communication. It did not seem new to me. Young as I was, even then it seemed like an oft-told tale—so often told that it had grown familiar to my mind. Nor did it seem so strange to me as it may do to the reader, that the hope to which my mother clung, even to the last, was that the parent who had thrust her from his door would open that

door wide for the reception of her child ; or that Peggy Magrath should so have fostered this same expectation as to have arrived at a certain conclusion that “ they ”—the *they* of whom she had often mysteriously spoken—“ would take kindly to the poor orphim.”

“ An’ I promised yer mother, Roland, that whin ye were big enough to take the long journey,” she said in conclusion, “ I would bring ye to yer rightful home ; an’ I have a bit o’ writin’ that’ll open their doors an’ their hearts to ye, my bonny one, settin’ aside yer face, that’s as like hers as two pays. An’ now, darling, ye know all that’s been kipt saycret from ye so long ; an’ it’s time ye were drest. Ohone ! ohone ! that I should help to dress ye for the last time ; but may be, ye’ll not forget poor ould Peggy Magrath ;” and her tears burst forth afresh.

“ I don’t want to put them on,” I said, as Peggy unfolded my Sunday “ shute,” and brought out of her bundle the stockings and shoes and cap which had been scrupulously reserved for this occasion ; and it was not till a bright thought entered my mind—namely, that when the bustle of my reception was over, I would cause Peggy to be detained by main force, if needful—that I submitted to her wishes.

An hour afterwards, with hearts beating high and fast, Peggy in her red cloak and a clean white cap, her bundle at her back containing my cast-off garments, and I in my unaccustomed Sunday “ shute,” we were again on the road, and within sight of our haven

CHAPTER VII.

OUR EXPEDITION COMES TO NOTHING.

"HALLOO! mistress; and what may you be wanting?" The voice fell upon our ears as we were wading knee-deep in straw through a large farmyard, towards what seemed the front door of a large, old-fashioned house, and to which, apparently, there was no other approach. On looking round, we were made aware that the interruption proceeded from a stable or cowhouse on one side of the yard; and the next minute, a man in a dirty smock-frock came stalking to us through the straw.

"What may ye be wanting here, I say?" he demanded again, when he reached us.

"An' sure 'tis afther spaking to the squire we'd be," said Peggy, nothing daunted; "an' maybe ye'd let him know that there's one begging to have a few words wid him in private, if so be he plazes."

"Catch me at that, you old vagrant," said the man, in a surly voice. "We don't want no beggars here; so you'll just turn out of the yard, mistress, bag and baggage, as soon as you please:" and he pointed with a pitchfork, which he held in his hand, to the gate through which we had entered.

"Is it a wagrant ye call me?" retorted Peggy, indignantly, and maintaining her ground: "ye'll see what the squire will have to say to ye for that same

word whin he knows the rights of it. An' now ye'll plaze to let us be passing ye," she added, pushing the man aside contemptuously, and holding me tight by the hand.

The man looked for a moment as though he would have disputed our progress ; but he didn't. He even put on a more civil look when he saw that I was frightened, and stood clinging to Peggy's cloak.

"I didn't mean to scare the boy," he said ; "but I'm acting by orders not to let vagrants and beggars go up to the house. You know your business, dame, better than I ; but I tell you, you may go further and fare wuss." Saying this, he moved out of the way to let us pass, and we reached the door of the house without further interruption, except by the ferocious barking of a large dog, which sprang at us from his kennel.

A woman, coarse-featured and strong-limbed, who was scouring milk pails at the door, demanded, in no gentle voice, what business we had there ; and, on being told by Mrs. Magrath that her business was with the squire, she disappeared for a moment—not out of hearing, however ; for we could distinguish her voice, screaming in a high pitch, "Father, you are wanted."

"It's yer aunt, dear—yer poor mother's shister," whispered Peggy to me, grasping my hand nervously : "she's got a fine vice" (voice she meant) "anyway ; but she's not like poor Ellen ; and I'm misdoubting," she added, speaking more to herself than to me.

"I don't like her," I cried, trembling violently with painful excitement—"I don't : and I won't stop here ; let us go away, Peggy :" and I clung to her with a tighter grasp.

"Whist, darling: it'll be a bright wilcome ye'll have whin they know ye," said she.

Our further whispers were stifled by the return of the woman, followed by an aged-looking, gray-headed man, in top boots and drab "smalls"; he was stripped to his shirt-sleeves—rather dirty ones; and in one of his hands, which were large and bony, he held a formidable whip. His features, as I now remember them, were contracted and mean, as though a long course of grasping and pinching had impressed its character on his countenance; and his voice sounded in my ears sharp and harsh, as he addressed himself to Peggy, and demanded her business.

Mrs. Magrath thrust her hand into her pocket, and drawing forth a small packet, presented it to her interrogator; it was a letter, folded within a piece of brown paper, not very clean. "Maybe ye'll read that bit o' writin', yer honour," she said, courtseying very humbly.

"None of your begging petitions for me, mistress," said he, angrily, pushing it back again: "If you've come here with that sort of thing, you'll find out your mistake; so you had better tramp: d'ye hear?"

"I niver begged of you nor yours, sir," said Peggy, with some degree of irritation; "an' it wasn't for that——. But, maybe ye'd betther read what's writ," she added, in a softened tone, again offering the letter with one hand, laying the other fondly on my head.

"Read the paper, father," said my aunt—for I had no doubt that she was my aunt—"read it, and ha' done with the woman."

Thus adjured and prompted, the squire, as he was called by Peggy, took the letter, and, placing on his nose a pair of spectacles, opened it and glanced over its contents. I watched his countenance, and so did Peggy, as he slowly turned it over in his hand. I could see that, for a moment, his lips and nostrils quivered with excitement or surprise; but it was only for a moment, and then a dark and ominous scowl gathered on his wrinkled brow, and his cheeks turned pale with evident fury.

He dashed the letter on the ground, and, with an epithet which I shall not repeat, and in a yell which made my blood run cold with terror, demanded of Mrs. Magrath from whom she obtained that paper.

"Sure, an' yer honour, the name's writ plain at the fut," said Peggy, herself startled by the sudden exhibition of almost unbridled wrath.

"The name on that letter is Ellen Leigh," said he, trampling on it with his heavy boot; while, by a strange and strong effort, as it must have been, he smoothed his rugged countenance and lowered his voice to a sort of hissing whisper. "I know no person of that name. Who *is* Ellen Leigh?"

I noticed, with the quickness and intuition which, young as I was, my street experiences had taught me, that, at the mention of that name, my aunt gave a sudden start; but she immediately recovered her look of indifference and stolidity, and went on scrubbing her milk pails with renewed energy.

"Who *is* Ellen Leigh?" my grandfather asked again, in the same low, mocking tone, as Peggy, struck

with astonishment as it seemed, stood staring at him, speechless.

"It's jokin' wid poor Peggy Magrath yer honour is," she replied, at length ; " but sure yer honour's wilcome to that same, any way."

" I'm in no humour for trifling," said the old man, brandishing his whip as he spoke ; " and once more, I ask you, *who* is Ellen Leigh ? "

The tone and manner too decided this time to admit of being misunderstood ; and Peggy drew herself up to her full height, and, looking my grandfather full in the face, replied, with more dignity than I had ever before known her to assume, " If ye must be tould, sir, what ye know widout telling, ye must understand that Ellen Leigh, who is in the could grave-yard——"

" And what is that to me, woman ? " demanded he, without any visible emotion.

" Hear to him ! " exclaimed Peggy, lifting her hands in astonishment ; " hear to him, axing what to him is it that his owne daughter is dead and buried ! "

" I have got two daughters," said my grandfather, coldly ; " this is one of them," and he pointed to the woman by his side, who had left the scouring of her pails, and was listening to the conversation with a strange mingling of interest and defiance in her countenance, as I now remember it ; " and the other," continued he, " is married, and well-to-do in the world. I had another girl once ; but—— but what is that to you, you wretched impostor ? " he interjected fiercely ; " and what do you want here ? "

" Yer honour, yer honour ! " exclaimed poor Peggy,

gasping for breath, and struggling for my sake to keep down her rising wrath, "ye cannot be sinsible of what's writ down in that letther. Dear, kind lady!" she went on, turning to my aunt, "spake for me, and read that bit o' writin': ye'll see thin, that Peggy Magrath is no impostor. It was these hands, lady, that closed poor Ellen's eyes, and the tongue that's now spaking promised yer darling shister to bring back her memory to ye from the grave. Maybe, ye'll say, she sinned agen ye all; and while she lived, she didn't taize ye wid beggin' for yer help an' pity; but, o-hone! she didn't deserve to be cast off; and now she axes ye from the grave to be marciful, as ye hope for marcy, and to take to yer hearts the innocent boy that had no share in his mother's wrong-doin', any way. Ay, look at him, kind lady. Roland Leigh"—and Peggy placed me before her; "and ye may ax him if the poor lone widow doesn't feel the bitter sorrow to part wid him; but I promised Ellen Leigh—yer shister, yer owne shister, lady—that my own hands should lade him to ye. Take him, lady—yer own shister's orphan child—an' as ye dale wid him, may——"

I know not whether it was astonishment or compunction that had kept my aunt silent hitherto, while Peggy, with more fervour than I can describe, and with tears streaming down her rugged cheeks, was pleading my mother's cause and mine. But if it was the latter, the transitory emotion soon subsided. She honoured me with a dull stare, however, as she said hastily—"There, that will do: and you mean to tell us that this is Ellen's boy, do you?"

"It is a lie, Martha," screamed her father ; "and the woman is a cheat and impostor. She shall be dragged through the horsepond, she shall, for a witch ; she shall be put into the stocks for a vagrant ; she shall taste the beadle's whip ;" and he again flourished that which he held in his hand. I think in his anger he would have struck poor Peggy, if his daughter had not restrained him.

"Be quiet, father," she said. "I suppose it does not signify to us whether the woman is a cheat or not. Any way, we have got nothing to do with the brat that she has brought here. And as for you, mistress," she added, turning to my protectress, "you know the way you came, I suppose."

"The sorra a bit I'll forgit it, ma'am," said Peggy, indignantly.

"That's fortunate," retorted my aunt with a sneer, "because you'll be able to find your way back again ; and, let me tell you, the sooner you are on the road the better."

To say that Mrs. Magrath received this dismissal with profound astonishment, would be incorrect ; for our reception, and the personal appearance and demeanour of my grandfather and aunt, together with the general aspect of the farm—so different in all respects from her sanguine imaginings—must have prepared her for the rebuff she experienced. But the gradual downfall of her expectations had given time for bitter feelings to rise up in their stead ; and her passions unhappily getting the better of her reason, they broke out in an avalanche of angry denunciations,

while she assumed attitudes of defiance which threatened a speedy renewal of a scene elsewhere described.

Perhaps it might have been avoided, but at that moment my grandfather again raised his whip. It was too much for the warm-tempered Irishwoman: in another moment the weapon was wrested from his hand; in another she was struggling violently to free herself from the rough grasp of three or four farm labourers, who had run to the assistance of their master against "the mad beggar-woman"; in a few minutes more, a constable and a parish beadle entered upon the scene—the one with his staff, and the other in gold-laced hat. After that, all is a blank in my shadowy remembrance, until a vision of a parish stocks rises before my mind's eye, with Peggy Magrath securely fastened therein. A crowd of villagers gathered round, finding food for their mirth in her humiliation; and I, seated by Peggy's side, sobbing and weeping, with one of her arms thrown over me as if for protection, and with my face hidden in her lap.

On being released from her ignominious confinement in the stocks, Peggy shouldered her bundle and marched with dignity through the rustic mob, which divided at our approach, for she looked formidable; and we had cleared the village and were a mile or two on the road before she slackened her pace.

Her dignity and apparent scornful disregard of the treatment she had received, was all in outward show, however; and as soon as we were well out of sight

and hearing, her pent-up feelings broke out in such wild extravagances, that, child as I was, I began to think the charge of madness not unwarrantable. She sang wild songs at the pitch of her voice, and danced with the vigour of—of—what can I say more forcible than of an excited Irishwoman? I have since then heard of Indian war-songs and war-dances, death-songs and death-dances, and never without thinking of Peggy Magrath's performances on that day, with myself only as a terrified spectator and listener.

She sank exhausted on the road at last, and her active exertions gave way to unnatural mirth and floods of tears, in the course of which she clasped me to her bosom with a kind of rapturous joy.

This was the first scene in our retreat, and I willingly spare my readers the recital of what followed day after day. I have read somewhere that the march of an army into an enemy's country, when flushed with hope of conquest, is order and discipline and decorum itself, compared with the same army when compelled to beat a retreat. It was so with us. Our expedition had been a failure, however Mrs. Magrath might personally rejoice in her emancipation from the promise she had made to my dead mother, and I in not being separated from my earliest friend; and the remembrance of her defeat and of the degradation she had undergone, to say nothing of the unfortunate and cruel, though perhaps not unnatural, misconception of her motives in attempting to restore me to my mother's relatives, rankled in poor Peggy's bosom.

Her self-respect was gone, and, alas! her money was .

almost gone too ; and it was in a miserable state of destitution that, two months after our departure, we entered London, and returned to the refuge of Whiskers' Rents and our old garret.

In the course of a few days, however, our prospects had improved. Peggy was welcomed back again by her old employers ; and the story of the wrongs I had suffered, extracted from them a few presents to replace the Sunday "shute," which had fallen a sacrifice to the imperative necessities of our disastrous journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGION AT WHISKERS' RENTS.—A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.—MY SUNDAY SUIT PROMISES TO BE OF USE.

"A SUNDAY suit," I have written ; but what did I want with a Sunday suit, to whom the Christian day of rest was but a day of more confirmed and vicious idleness than any day in the week besides ? In my mother's time, so far as I remember, all days in the week were alike to me ; but as I grew older I became aware that there 'was, somehow or other, a difference. I knew Sunday by name, and that it was the day on which Peggy, being always at home, made her own washing-day—that is, she employed herself in the morning in this operation, which lasted no great while, for she hadn't much to wash ; and in the afternoon she indulged herself, I am afraid, in an extra glass of her favourite cordial, and afterwards slept heavily till

supper-time. I knew also that on this day there was more lounging, smoking, drinking, gambling, quarrelling, and fighting in Whiskers' Rents than on any other ; and having by this time formed a sort of connection with boys of my own age in the neighbourhood, it was a day especially set apart for excursions into distant haunts and to snug corners, where we could play at pitch-and-toss for halfpence without fear of interruption.

I knew theoretically that there was some sort of respect paid to this day, above others, by people that did not live in Whiskers' Rents or in such places ; and, practically, I was aware that the better sort of shops were shut up all day—that shopkeepers and others, perhaps, put on their best clothes on Sundays. Moreover, Whiskers' Rents was not so cut off by distance from the rest of the London world that I didn't hear the sound of church bells two or three times a day. Nay, I knew what churches were ; for I was acquainted with the outsides of many, and was aware that on Sundays people in their aforesaid best clothes went into them. But what they went there for was a sort of mystery, with which I did not suppose I had any concern.

I had never seen a Bible, at least I am not aware that I had ever seen one. At any rate I had never heard of the "good news" and "glad tidings" and "faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance," which it is commissioned to bring to the lost and ruined race of Adam. I had never heard of Christ Jesus, and his wonderful love in coming into the world to save

sinners. The name, indeed, was not unfamiliar to my ears ; for I heard it often, in oaths and curses, or otherwise "taken in vain" ; but this was all. For, reader, those were not the days in which Christian men and women went far out of their way to make known to such as I was then, to such as we all were in Whiskers' Rents, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." So far as practical efforts were concerned, none cared for our souls—as little, perhaps, as we cared for them ourselves.

About religion in general, I knew just this :—I knew that Mrs. Magrath was said, by herself and others, to be a "Roman," and also that she was an Irishwoman ; but I have now a very indistinct remembrance of the ideas I attached to these words. I believe, however, that I thought them synonymous, but that it was no matter to me. I sometimes heard her talk about her "praste," whom I rightly judged to be a man of some sort ; but there my knowledge ended, for I never saw this "praste." I think now that poor Peggy had some conscientious scruples on this matter. She knew that my mother was a heretic, or at any rate that she was not a Romanist ; and though she felt no desire to change her religion, which was, alas ! a very comfortable one for her, with her many evil habits, she had no mind to make a proselyte of me. So when she went to her chapel—which was twice a year, namely, on Christmas day and Good Friday—she uniformly gave me to understand that it was something with which I had no concern. Whether she thought that I was in no spiritual danger

by not belonging to her own church, I cannot tell ; I only know that here my knowledge ended.

But without further attempts at analysis, there was clearly no such thing as religion generally recognised in Whiskers' Rents. We did not look after it, and it was not brought to us. Meanwhile the church bells around us were chimed, and churches and chapels and meeting-houses were opened Sunday after Sunday, and decent sort of people went to them ; and, in the days of which I am writing, good Christian people bemoaned and deplored that there was so much ignorance and vice somewhere or other, or somehow or other, which could not be reached by any human means they could devise ; and other Christian people were glorying in the persuasion that there never was such a happy land for religious privileges and means of grace as Protestant England, and not such another city in the world for these same privileges and means as the city round about Whiskers' Rents ; and that, if Whiskers' Rents did not behave itself as it ought to do, and put on its Sunday garments, and go to church, or to chapel, or to meeting-house, it was Whiskers' Rents' own fault ; and other so-called Christian people in those same times were saying that it did not signify, for that if Whiskers' Rents *was* to be brought into the fold, it *would* be brought into the fold ; and if it were not to be brought into the fold, it would not be brought into the fold ; and that, when the time came to favour it, it would be favoured, and that they would not take the work out of the Master's hands ; while not a few really excellent Christian people were

profoundly ignorant that there were such places as Whiskers' Rents within a few stones'-throw of their comfortable ceiled houses and their chosen sanctuaries, and would scarcely have believed it if they had been told.

And so the church bells went on chiming.

I was about ten years old, probably, when the garret next to ours received a new and permanent lodger, in the form of a small, dirty, and drunken tailor. How he came to find out "Whiskers," or what could have induced him to fix his abode there, is a question that I am not bound to solve. Of course he was very poor, or he would not have thought of it; and having said that he was a drunken tailor, I need not say *why* he was poor.

He was a journeyman tailor; and he often had no work to do. What he had was principally, perhaps altogether, odd jobs of repairing; and he worked in his own garret—not in the workshop of his employer.

He did not come to "Whiskers" alone. Accompanying him was a girl, perhaps a little older than myself; and she was the daughter of the new lodger. I first knew this when, one evening, she tapped very feebly and hesitatingly at our door, and when told by Peggy to come in, asked, as timidly as she knocked, would we be so kind as to give her a light? Her father was gone out, she said, and it had come on so dark; and her fire was gone out too, and she had been trying to strike a light, but her fingers were so cold. All this she said, though so shrinkingly, yet so rapidly

and hurriedly, that there was no stopping her till she had done ; and then she stood so meekly waiting for an answer, and so patiently, though withal she was shivering with cold (for it was a cold frosty January evening), that Peggy's sympathies were roused ; and in another minute she had coaxed the girl to come and warm herself at our fire, which she seemed very glad to do.

But she did not stop long, for she seemed frightened ; and after telling Mrs. Magrath, in answer to her inquiries, that her name was Fanny, and that she had no mother, she darted back again into her own garret, with her lighted candle, and we saw no more of her that night.

She was a fair-faced little thing, with brown hair and pleasant-looking bright eyes ; and she had a soft, musical voice.

After that, and very shortly, I became better acquainted with Fanny. Her father was often out in the evening, and did not return till late ; and her fire was often out too, at the same time. It wouldn't have been like kind-hearted compassionate Peggy Magrath if, under such circumstances, she had not invited the motherless child to bring her work to our fireside. Very soon little Fanny's diffidence wore off ; and then we found that she was a cheerful little thing, though we knew she had a hard life of it.

She did not tell us this, but we could not help knowing it. Oh, how often did I hear her father cruelly beating her, when he was in one of his drunken fits, and Fanny crying and praying for

mercy ! It was nothing new or strange for children to be cruelly beaten at Whiskers' Rents. I had seen and heard too much of that to be very much concerned about it ; but, somehow, I could not bear to hear Fanny beaten ; and her plaintive cry, "Father, dear father, don't, pray don't ! it is not my fault, indeed !" often made my blood boil with indignation ; and I wished myself old and strong enough to be the poor child's champion, and so to deliver her from her punishment.

Then we found out—very soon, too, though not by any complainings of hers—that Fanny was often very hungry. Indeed, her thin face and arms spoke for themselves, without any aid from her tongue. It was not greatly to be wondered at that she had not enough to eat, considering what sort of a man her father was—how often he was out of work, and how, when he had work, the greater part of his wages went for strong drink. But, hungry as she was, it was with difficulty that Peggy could get her sometimes to take a share of our supper ; though, when she had broken through this ice of diffidence, her bright, sparkling eyes told how grateful she was.

But, wretchedly poor as she and her father were, and much as she had to endure, Fanny was evidently a different sort of being from the rest of the children in Whiskers' Rents, including myself of course ; so different that she soon became known as "a speckled bird" ; and as she avoided general companionship with the young Whiskers' Renters, she was marked out for general persecution. On one occasion, when she was

returning from the chandlery shop which supplied Whiskers' Rents with the greater part of its provisions, she was assaulted by a young savage, who, after tripping her up on the pavement, began coolly to ransack the little basket she carried in her hand, and would have made off with the spoil if I had not happened to be playing close by, and marching up to the assailant, requested him to let the girl alone.

Of course we fought about it; but by this time I was pretty well used to fighting: and while the combat was going on, Fanny escaped her persecutor. From this time I regarded myself as her champion.

Notwithstanding her hard lot, however, Fanny was, as I just now wrote, a cheerful child. I often heard her singing when she was alone; and though I could not hear the words she sang, her musical voice sounded wonderfully pleasant to my ears. It was strange that she had the heart to sing, considering how much she had to endure from her drunken father; but singing seemed to be a relief to her, and cheerfulness her natural element. One day Mrs. Magrath heard her.

"That's a mighty purty song ye were singing to-day, Fanny," said she, when the tailor's daughter came in to sit by our fire in the evening.

Fanny blushed: I thought I had never seen her look so pleasing and engaging before. "I didn't know you could hear me," she said.

"Well, child, an' it was no harm," said Peggy; "an' maybe ye'll sing the same song agen, just to plaze me."

"Oh no, I couldn't, really," said Fanny, quite

frightened ; “ I can’t sing at all if anybody is listening, I am sure : but—but,” she added, hesitating, “ I will tell you what I was singing about, if you please, Mrs. Magrath ; ” and, without waiting Peggy’s formal consent, she whispered at first, but gaining courage as she went on, repeated the following hymn :—

“ The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supplied ;
Since he is mine and I am his,
What can I want beside ?

“ He leads me to the place
Where heavenly pasture grows,
Where living waters gently pass,
And full salvation flows.

“ If e’er I go astray,
He doth my soul reclaim,
And guides me in his own right way,
For his most holy name.

“ While he affords his aid,
I cannot yield to fear ;
Though I should walk through death’s dark shade,
My Shepherd’s with me there.”

“ Hear to that, ye little limb,” said Peggy, addressing herself to me, when Fanny had finished her recitation : “ an’ ye to come bringing home the bad songs ye’re picking up, of Sloppy Stevens, an’ such like—bad loock to ’em ! Ye’d be long till ye larn’t purty words like them.”

“ I know—

“ When Joseph was an old man,
And an old man was he— ”

and

“ The first good joy our Mary had— ”

said I, quoting the introductory lines of two carols I had caught from Peggy's own lips.

"An' that's a purty song too," said Mrs. Magrath, "but not aqual to Fanny's, any way. An' ye'll know more such, darling, I warrant:" this to Fanny.

Yes, she did know more besides that, Fanny acknowledged, still blushing.

"An' is it yer father that taches ye them?" inquired Peggy.

The blush was gone, and Fanny's lips quivered, while tears came to her bright eyes. She shook her head mournfully.

"I might have been sure of that—that it wasn't him; bad loock to my tongue," said Peggy.

"I learn them at the Sunday school," rejoined Fanny, hastily.

I had never heard of a Sunday school, nor had Peggy Magrath. Sunday schools were not a quarter of a century old at that time: they were few in number, and weak and imperfect in material; and the fame of them had not penetrated to Whiskers' Rents. So Fanny was set the task of describing a Sunday school, in reply to the inquiry: "An' what like is that, darling?"

The Sunday school to which Fanny went was connected with a place of worship a mile or more from Whiskers' Rents. She had gone to it before her mother died, and when her father lived nearer to it than now. One of her mother's last prayers to her drunken husband was, that he would not hinder Fanny from going to the Sunday school after her own

death. He gave the promise, and had hitherto kept it.

"An' ye larn a power of things there, it's likely," said Peggy, when Fanny had come to the end of her explanation.

Yes ; she learned to read, and learned hymns, she said.

"I want to learn to read," I said ; "but they won't have me, I reckon."

Fanny thought they would ; was almost sure they would——if—if—I went clean.

I need not repeat any more of the conversation. It was agreed that, on the next Sunday, I should go with Fanny to the Sunday school, to see how I liked it.

And now my Sunday suit would be of some use.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUNDAY SCHOOL, A GREAT MANY YEARS AGO.

BEFORE I proceed with my history, let me observe that the Sunday schools of the times of which I am telling were different, in some respects, from Sunday schools of the present day. The system was then in the experimental stage of its existence. Many good people stood aloof from the movement, as something doubtful in its design, and portentous in its aspect ; while those who gave it their qualified approval were not, in general, prepared to sacrifice their own ease and

leisure by personally engaging in the work. It was thus necessarily left to paid teachers, and few of these had any great interest in the occupation, or sympathy with the pious benevolence of their employers. Indeed, the instruction given in the first Sunday schools was mainly of a secular character, and was instilled with the rigidity and severity which, as I have since been told, marked, in those days, the school-master's profession in general. Unless the reader is prepared to bear this in mind, he had better skip this chapter.

I may as well confess that when the time came for putting my resolution into effect, my sudden desire for learning had considerably evaporated ; and if I had not pledged my word to Fanny, I believe I should have given the Sunday school the slip altogether. But, by some means, the tailor's daughter had gained an unaccountable ascendancy over me ; and she would not hear of my turning back, which I felt a great disposition to do before we were well clear of Whiskers' Rents.

We went on, however, and in due time I found myself ushered into a tolerably large, low-pitched room, over a set of stables, in a narrow street ; and was introduced by my conductress to a brisk-looking little man, in a shabby suit of black, who seemed to be the only adult teacher of some fifty or sixty boys, whose eyes were fixed on me while I underwent a preliminary examination. Meanwhile, Fanny slipped away to the further end of the room, and was lost to my sight among an equal number of girls.

"So you think you would like to come to school, eh?" said the brisk little man, when he had ascertained my name and residence.

"I don't know yet," said I; for I saw under the arm of my questioner a formidable looking cane, which certainly might be intended only as a pointer, but which my instinct told me could be easily turned into an instrument of punishment.

"You don't know, eh?" said the little man—"you boys there, in the Testament class, if I come to you"—and he shook the cane at the noisy offenders, thus producing a temporary hush of the hubbub which had called off his attention from me—"you don't know? and why don't you know?"

"I reckon you'll quilt me," said I, eyeing the instrument now waving in his hand; "and I shan't like that."

"What a strange boy!" said he. "Have you never been to school anywhere?"

"No," said I, bluntly.

"I thought not, or you would have learned better manners. You can say 'sir,' I suppose, if you try?—you, Smith, there, come here!"—this to a boy who had broken out into a loud yell.

"It wasn't me sir," said the boy; "if you please it was Dick Bliss run a pin into me."

"Bliss, you are incorrigible. Your nature will never lead you to your name, boy. You come here—you won't, eh? Go and fetch him, two of you big boys."

There was a sudden rush towards the culprit, a stumbling over forms, and presently the boy was

brought before the tribunal in the custody of four grinning schoolfellows.

"I'll talk to you presently, Bliss," said the teacher ; and then he turned to me again.

"You needn't be afraid, my boy," said he ; and he meant, I believe, to speak encouragingly ; "this"—and he held up the cane—"is only meant for bad boys, like that one ; and what you come here for is to learn to be good, you know. And, when you are at church, you will mind what the minister says, eh ?" and then, finding out by other questions how deplorably ignorant I was, he led me to a low form at some distance from his desk, where, with eight or nine others—some older than myself and others much younger—I was put under the tuition of one of the older boys, with a recommendation to look sharp and learn the alphabet. From this point I soon had ocular demonstration, in the castigation of Dick Bliss, that the cane was considered, by one teacher at least, as a necessary and important adjunct of Sunday school instruction.

I shall pass over the further occurrences of this day, only premising that we were presently marched in much disorder to church, from the gallery of which I for the first time witnessed—I cannot say joined in—the public worship of God. It was very little that I comprehended of the scene before me. Two things only, as I now remember, made much impression on my mind : the first was, that our poor teacher had hard work to keep order among us, in which, however, he was assisted by a man in a gold-laced coat, whom I knew to be a beadle ; and the other was the grand and

overpowering music of the church organ, which held me entranced during its performance, and surprised me into tears of delight.

The school-time in the afternoon was a repetition of that in the morning, except that we were not marched to church, which I regretted. To compensate for this, however, one of the patrons of the school, as I understood, visited it, and conducted a devotional service before we were dismissed.

Upon the whole I was, I think, rather pleased with my first day's experience of this new method of spending Sunday, in spite of the cane, which was kept pretty constantly in threatening motion ; and on the following Sunday I was ready enough to accompany Fanny to school.

There was the same brisk little man ; the same occasional hubbub, quelled by the same threatening or applied cane ; the same big boy to teach my class the letters of the alphabet—this boy having also, as I discovered, a vicious habit of secretly pinching the little boys, perhaps to quicken their intellects ; there was also the same disorderly marching to church, and the same sweet and thrilling tones of the organ, which affected me even more powerfully than they had done on the previous Sunday ; and thereby my Sunday School experiences were, for that time, brought to a sudden termination.

Tears were again coursing down my cheeks, and I was sobbing in an ecstasy of gladness ; when unfortunately my emotions attracted the notice of a boy at my side. It was the big boy who had been trying to

teach me the alphabet, and whom, probably, I had provoked by my stupidity. He was a tyrant at the heart, I have not the slightest doubt, and, looking upon my tears as a sign of pusillanimity, he slyly gave me a sharp pinch, grinning at the same time in my face, and whispering in my ear, "Cry, baby: wants his mammy."

In a moment, the tones of the organ had lost their power over me, the scene had disappeared, and the place was forgotten. My Whiskers' Rents education had taught me promptitude in revenging injuries, and standing up for my own rights; and a sudden blow from my practised fist, which prostrated my tormentor, was accompanied by a very audible "Do that again, will you?" and "See how you like that!"

The indecorous uproar, which even the loud tones of the organ could not drown, startled the congregation, who must have been still more surprised, on looking up at the gallery, to see me stripping off my upper garment in a towering passion, and offering fight to my young teacher, as he slowly rose bleeding from the assault. By this time, however, the beadle had come to the rescue, and I was removed from the church, struggling and kicking, to be locked in the churchyard bone-house.

And there I sat, amidst the dry dust and crumbling fragments of mortality. A faint light entered through a narrow grating in the wall; and it was well for me, perhaps, that my strong and passionate indignation overcame for the time those emotions of terror which

would have been natural enough in a boy on finding himself shut up in such a frightful place.

It was not till after the space of two or three hours that I was delivered from my imprisonment and led captive to the school-room ; and it required no prophet to tell me that my punishment was not yet completed.

Another visitor was at the school that day. Very soft and gentle, I remember, his tones were ; and I firmly believe now, though I did not think so then, that he had a tender and compassionate heart. But he had witnessed my furious outbreak, and had been shocked at what he rightly enough considered my depravity. Whether the means taken to correct it were wise and adapted to instruct, melt, and reform, is another question.

"Boy," said the visitor, when I was led up to the desk, "you have behaved very wickedly to day."

"No, I haven't," I answered : "I'll do it again if he doesn't look out ;" and I turned savagely towards the monitor, whose swollen face proclaimed the severity of my attack. "I'll whop him now, if he'll stand out. Come !" and my actions appropriately enough accompanied my words

"Really, I never witnessed anything like this," said the astonished visitor, turning to the master, while I was stung into fresh passion by the scarcely suppressed laughter of the boys around me. "Do you often have such tempers as this to deal with?"

"The boy comes from a bad neighbourhood," said the teacher. "I don't know what else is to be expected from a place like Whiskers' Rents."

"I don't care," I said sullenly: "he hadn't any business to pinch me."

"If you please, sir, I didn't touch him," said the boy.

"And if he had pinched you," interposed the visitor mildly, "have you not learned yet what the Bible tells you, to bless them that curse you, and to do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you? The boy must be made an example of, Mr.—:" this was addressed to the brisk little man, who was handling his cane in anticipation of the sentence—"yes, there is no alternative; you must punish him severely, or the whole school will be encouraged to rebellion."

"Very good, sir," said the master. "Shall I flog him now?"

At this moment a slight form passed by me, and, to my surprise, Fanny stood before my judge, very pale and trembling, with tears in her eyes and her hands clasped together supplicatingly.

"What do you want, my child?" said the patron encouragingly.

"Oh! if you please, sir," said Fanny, in tremulous earnestness, "will you forgive Roland this once, sir? He has not got father or mother, and he does not know any better."

"No; but we must teach him better, my dear," said the gentleman. "But, indeed, he must have known better than to be fighting—and in church, too. Shocking! Is he your brother, my child, that you wish him not to be punished?"

"Oh! no, sir—no, indeed, but Roland Leigh is very good to me, and indeed, sir, I do not think he knows better; for he has only been to school one Sunday before this, and I don't think he was ever in church till last Sunday. And besides, sir,"—and then my little advocate hesitated.

"Besides what, my girl?" asked the judge.

"I think, sir—if you please, sir, I think," sobbed Fanny, "that if you beat Roland, it will make him keep away from school, sir, and he would get with bad boys again, and—and——"

"My dear child," said the gentleman, "I don't know how it is you are permitted to leave your class: I am not angry with you—oh no; but it is not quite proper"—poor Fanny hung her head despondingly—"you are a very good girl to think so kindly of this naughty boy," he went on; "but you do not exactly understand. You see, we are told that the rod—that is the cane, or anything of that sort—is to be used, and that those who have authority are not to bear the sword—which means the cane, you know—in vain; and that we are to be a terror to evil doers, as well as a praise to them that do well. You understand this, my child?"

"But oh! sir," continued my young pleader, "if you would be kind enough"—and here she stopped short again, and looked up imploringly.

The gentleman was evidently puzzled, and turned to me. "You see, my boy," said he, "what unhappiness arises from wicked deeds. Here you have not only brought trouble on yourself, but on your kind young

friend too. Now you must beg pardon of all your schoolfellows, for the disgrace you have brought upon them; and then, if you promise to behave better in future, you shall not be flogged this time."

"Do you hear what the gentleman says to you?" sharply demanded the master, laying his hand on my arm."

Yes, I heard it, and I had heard Fanny's plea for me, and I was thinking more of that than of the promised remission of my punishment. While her gentle, persuasive voice was raised on my behalf, my feelings were softened, even towards the cause of my trouble; but at the sharp voice of the master, pride and obstinacy returned, and I refused to yield.

"You see how it is, my dear child," said the gentleman to Fanny, who had been watching my looks with sorrowful interest; "you see how perverse he is, go to your class, child;" and Fanny withdrew very mournfully.

I was not punished then, however, the execution of the sentence being deferred till the school was dismissed. And I remember that the gentleman took occasion, in an address which he gave, to warn the whole school against the indulgence of anger, hatred, malice, and all evil passions. There was a hymn sung also to the same effect, beginning with—

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite;"

and after that the school was dismissed—only that some of the boys lingered outside in the hope, I believe, of hearing my outcries; but of which pleasure

I disappointed them. Respecting what immediately followed, I will only say that I received a castigation which, if it did not reform me, failed through no want of zeal and energy in the castigator. I was then let go.

Fanny was waiting for me on the road homewards, and crying bitterly. She ran up to me as soon as she saw me, and laid her little arm on my shoulder, looking wistfully into my face.

“You are not angry with me, Roland?”

Angry!—angry with her? What was there to be angry about—with Fanny?

She did not know; she was not sure that I should not be, because she had got me to go to the school, she said. Well, as I was not angry with her, she hoped I was not angry with anybody else.

Wasn't I, though? Ah, well, never mind! but if I should ever see that boy again—the boy who pinched me at church, and brought such shame and pain upon me, wouldn't I?—that was all: and I shook my head knowingly and my fist savagely.

It would not do to preach patience and forgiveness to me then; Fanny could see this; so she put another question: “Did they hurt you much, Roland?”

She looked so comically piteous as she made this inquiry, that though I was aching and smarting from the nape of the neck downwards, and writhing in spirit; and though the involuntary convulsion brought tears to my eyes, I could not forbear laughing.

“Oh, Roland! how can you laugh about it?” she asked; and she really seemed so distressed that I left off, to please her.

"I won't go to the school again," I said, presently, when we were on our way to Whiskers' Rents.

"I was afraid you would say so," said my comforter; "and then you will grow up to know nothing but what is bad, and nobody will love you."

I did not care, I said, and felt. I was not going to be locked up in that ugly place again, and beaten: what did they do that for? I wanted to know.

Fanny tried to enlighten me, but without much success. If they were in the right to cane me for hitting the boy, wasn't I right in hitting him for pinching me? And if I was wrong, they were wrong too. At the time, I thought the logic good, and the argument unanswerable. Poor Fanny was in despair at my stupidity.

"You will never learn anything good, Roland, if you go on thinking such bad thoughts," she said.

I did not know what she meant by bad thoughts, I said, sullenly. I supposed she did not like to be knocked about better than I did, if the truth were known, and that she had bad thoughts too, as she called them, when her father beat her, and all for nothing.

"I pray to God to help me to bear it, and to take bad thoughts out of my heart, and to help me to please father better, and to forgive him if he does what is wrong," she whispered, softly.

I did not understand it. It was not Whiskers' Rents' way—I knew that: and so the matter ended at that time.

CHAPTER X.

MY YOUNG TEACHER.

Two or three weeks passed away, and with this lapse of time the first bitter feelings of my disgrace and punishment had subsided. Nevertheless, I adhered to my resolution not to go near the school again, and had returned to my former Sunday companionships and amusements. During this time I had seen little of Fanny; but one evening, when her father was from home, her hesitating tap was heard at our door, and she entered, smiling.

"I am come to teach you to read, Roland," said she; "you will let me, won't you?"

Wouldn't I? There was some fun in that. I wondered I had not thought of this plan before. In five minutes we were busy at work—Peggy looking on, and listening with evident though silent wonderment at the profound scholarship of my young teacher.

I shall not detail, step by step, the progress I made in learning; and how I gradually surmounted the difficulties which encumbered the way, so that in the course of a few weeks, I was able to spell words of one syllable, very much to poor Peggy's astonishment. But this was only a small part, and the least important part of the instruction given. Oh, the lessons of wisdom and love that I might have learned then from my dear little teacher! How often did she desist

from the mechanical part of her self-imposed labour, to speak, in her simple, artless way, of the loving Saviour and his mercy ;—of his self-imposed poverty ; of the miracles he wrought, the sufferings he endured, the persecutions which followed him from the cradle to the grave. She seemed to have the whole history of his life and death, and resurrection, and glorious ascension in her memory and in her heart ; and with the simple, implicit trust of childhood, yet with the strong and fervent faith of matured discipleship, she believed in his ever-present help in time of need. I have never, to the present day, read or pondered those words of the Lord Jesus—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,"—without remembering little Fanny. Pleasant times these are to remember.

As to poor Peggy Magrath, she sat and heard, as one entranced. Her wonder seemed to be divided between the novelty of the things which she heard, and the astounding fact that Fanny's little head could contain so much knowledge. She did not know then, nor did I, that all these things were laid up in the dear child's heart ; and that out of its abundance the mouth spake.

Yes, pleasant times these are to remember, I say again : but they were soon to come to a close.

Nor could these lessons be given and received except at uncertain intervals. The selfish and drunken tailor was willing enough that his daughter should pass the evenings in our room when he was absent

from his own ; but at other times he would scarcely suffer her to go out of his sight ; so that many days together passed in which we saw nothing of our little teacher, and knew of her existence only by the coarse and cruel tyranny which we knew to be daily exercised upon her. And what impressed me then, perhaps, more than anything else, with admiration of the poor child, was her patience and submission, her unwearied attention and obedience to her unworthy, wretched father, and her uncomplaining cheerfulness whenever she was released for a short time from her almost perpetual thralldom. I did not know at that time anything about heroism ; but I do remember that the first time I understood the meaning of the word, I applied it unhesitatingly to Fanny.

I have just said that I look back with pleasure to these hours of instruction. Alas ! they were the only hours of this period of my history which I can look back upon with satisfaction. I was, in truth, an idle and vicious young scapegrace. I had no occupation through the day but that of roaming the streets at my own will and pleasure, and was constantly getting into mischief with companions as idle and vicious as myself. Thus, the impressions made upon me by the gentle voice and affectionate earnestness of my young teacher were from time to time almost obliterated ; and if ever I formed any good resolutions, they were like the morning cloud and the early dew. But a change, little anticipated by me, was impending.

One summer evening I was surprised by the lengthened absence of Peggy Magrath. She had gone

out to work as usual, leaving me my dinner: she always took care to do this; but the time was long past for her return, and I listened in vain for her heavy foot upon the stairs. Tired at length of waiting, and of wondering what had become of my protectress, I lay down on my mattress and went soundly to sleep.

In the morning I looked round eagerly, but Peggy was still absent; and now, seriously alarmed, I was soon dressed, and descended the stairs. The first person I saw on reaching the court below, was an old acquaintance, whose name I have once or twice mentioned, but whom I must now more particularly introduce to the reader's notice. And this introduction demands a new chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME ACCOUNT OF SOLOMON STEVENS AND HIS SON.—

MRS. MAGRATH GETS INTO TROUBLE.

SLOPPY STEVENS, otherwise Solomon Stevens, was the son of one of the magnates of Whiskers' Rents—the personage next in importance to Whiskers himself, being no other than the great pedlar's ware merchant and general dealer in marine stores. Solomon Stevens the elder was, in his way, a man of notoriety. He was familiar with the police courts of the metropolis, had frequently suffered imprisonment as a receiver of stolen goods, and had on more than one occasion

narrowly escaped transportation as being concerned in a burglary. It is, however, chiefly with the younger Solomon that I have to do in this chapter, and whom, by way of distinction, I shall continue to call by the name bestowed upon him, for some undiscoverable reason, by his friends and neighbours in Whiskers' Rents and the parts adjacent.

It will not, I trust, be forgotten by my readers, that it was Sloppy Stevens who persuaded me to the theft of the apple, as already narrated; and that on that occasion I was strictly charged by Peggy Magrath to avoid his society in future, lest I should become as "bad and bould" as he was. It was not without reason that this warning was given; for, depraved as the whole juvenile population of Whiskers' Rents was, there were degrees of wickedness discernible even there; and in the foremost rank of vice stood Sloppy Stevens. He was the boldest blasphemer, the keenest gambler, the greatest cheat, and he had the character of being one of the most expert and daring youthful thieves in the whole community. Added to this, he was the incessant plague of the more peaceably disposed inhabitants of the neighbourhood, by the turbulence of his disposition; and of the brute creation—or that portion of it that had the unhappiness to fall into his power—by his inherent cruelty. Indeed, hardly a day passed in which the name of Sloppy Stevens was not mentioned in Whiskers' Rents, in a way which cast even the notoriety of his not-over-reputable parent into an honourable shade. In short, there was scarcely

any deed of unwonted wickedness transacted at Whiskers' Rents, in which Sloppy Stevens was not a leader.

To me, this youth had been more or less a terror from the time that, in obedience to Peggy's mandate, I had partially avoided his society. He was older and stronger than I; and it was his pleasure to lay in wait for me in undiscoverable holes and corners, and to pounce out upon me unawares, chase me through streets and lanes till he was tired of the sport, and then catch me and roll me in the mud, or otherwise maltreat me.

For a long time I endured persecution unresistingly; but, at about the time to which my narrative has reached, I had more than once turned upon my tormentor, and so far vindicated my right to be let alone as to make him more cautious of interfering with that right. Tyrants, whether young or old, are generally cowards, and my oppressor was no exception to this rule.

It was Sloppy Stevens, then, whom I encountered as I was setting out in search of the missing Peggy Magrath.

"Ha! ha!" shouted he, with a loud and jeering laugh; "where's Peggy—poor Peggy—pretty, pretty Peggy—honest Peggy?"

My anxiety to find my protectress overcame the repugnance I felt towards Sloppy Stevens, and I eagerly asked him if he knew where Peggy was.

"Oh! don't I?" he shouted with increased merriment. "What will you give me if I tell you?" he

asked, cunningly ; adding, "I ar'n't going to tell you for nothing, you know."

"I'll give you all the money I've got," said I, in great distress ; and, taking out of my pocket two or three pence, I held them out to him, and he speedily transferred them into his own. .

"Come along with me and I'll take you to her," he said.

He was evidently in high glee ; for he laughed again, as though at some exquisite joke ; but I paid little attention to this, and followed closely at his heels, until, after diving through several dark and dirty thoroughfares, we emerged into broader streets, and presently reached a dingy building, around which was gathered a little crowd of wretched-looking beings of both sexes.

"Do you know this place ?" asked Sloppy Stevens, with a malignant grin.

"Yes, I know it well enough," I said, staring bewilderedly ; it was a police-office. My conductor laughed again knowingly, and, pushing our way through the throng, we entered, without meeting with any obstruction, and I found myself in the midst of a large crowd of spectators and witnesses, in a good-sized room, just in time to hear a gentleman with a powdered head, who was mounted on an elevated seat, call out for "the next case."

There was a little confusion and bustle, and moving to and fro ; after which a door opened, and there entered—in her old red cloak and battered silk bonnet—Peggy Magrath, a prisoner, in charge of

a man whom I rightly enough supposed to be a constable.

"Ha, ha ! ho, ho !" said Sloppy Stevens to me in an under-breath, and throwing into his countenance and gestures all the expression of malicious gratification of which it was capable—and that was a great deal. "There's Peggy ! pretty Peggy ! honest Peggy ! and there's the beak. Hear what *he's* got to say, Roley-poley. Ho, ho ! ha, ha ! I'm off now. Any message to Whiskers, Roley ?" and in another moment he was gone.

Trembling with fright and apprehension, and dumb with astonishment, I watched and listened as in a dream.

"What is this prisoner charged with ?" demanded the magistrate.

With theft—theft in a dwelling-house—theft under trust. She had been detected in taking out of the house of her employer, in her large capacious pockets, a quantity of provisions, which were produced to bear witness against her. Then stood up the prosecutor to testify to her guilt, who deposed that the prisoner had worked in his house for some time as a charwoman, and had never been suspected of dishonesty.

"An' is it a thafe ye would make me out to be ?" demanded Peggy, in a reproachful tone.

"Silence ! prisoner ; you shall be heard in your own defence presently," said the magistrate ; and the prosecutor went on with his evidence.

She had never been suspected of dishonesty until—and then he proceeded to explain how suspicions had

first been excited, and a watch set, and suspicions confirmed, and a constable employed on the preceding evening, at her departure, to take her into custody ; how the articles there produced had been found upon her ; and how a sense of what was due to public justice had determined him to prosecute the prisoner.

Then upstarted the constable as a witness, and confirmed the statement of the prosecutor, deposing also, that, from the desperate resistance she made, he had great difficulty in conveying the prisoner to the watch-house, where eventually she had been lodged for the night.

And then poor Peggy was asked by the magistrate what she had to say for herself, and what account she could give of the articles found upon her. "You imply that you did not steal them?" said he. "How, then, came they into your possession?"

"Possession, yer honour!" said Peggy, with a puzzled look ; "an' sure they were not in my possession at all at all. 'Twas in my pockets, your worship ; and bad loock to the hands that put them there."

A loud laugh from the spectators followed this explanation, but it soon ceased.

"Do you mean to say that your own hands did not put them there?" demanded the magistrate.

"Is it Peggy Magrath that wouldn't scorn to tell a dirty lie?" said she. "An' sure it wasn't for any harm, yer honour."

"You confess that you stole these goods, then?" said the magistrate, pointing to the plunder on the

table, consisting of nearly half a loaf, a quantity of cooked meat, and various other articles of food.

"Stole, yer worship! Sure them's my parquisites."

Another laugh.

I have no remembrance of what followed until I heard the awful words, "Committed to Newgate." *

"To Newgate, yer honour! ohone, ohone!" exclaimed poor Peggy in a prolonged howl (I do not use the term with levity; for I can think of no other to express the tone of despair); "yer worship's jokin' wid poor Peggy Magrath. An' what'll become of little Roland, the core of me heart?"

"You should have thought of these consequences before," said the magistrate. "Remove the prisoner."

I do not remember any more, except that I rushed forward a few steps towards my poor nurse, and then fell, giddy and faint. When I came to myself, I was outside the office, seated on the pavement, and leaning against the wall, while a poor woman was bathing my forehead with cold water. She gave me a mug of water to drink, too, when I was partially recovered, and I drained it dry.

* The reader will bear in mind that I am writing of a long while ago, when the criminal laws of the country were much more severe than now, I may have occasion to refer to this subject again.

CHAPTER XII.

I AM HOMELESS.—FANNY, THE COMFORTER.

WHAT I did with myself the remainder of that miserable day, I know not; but it was not till nightfall that I returned to Whiskers' Rents, weary and wretched. I had not eaten anything that day, though I do not remember that I was hungry. I knew only that I was desolate.

And so I returned to Whiskers' Rents—my home—the only home I knew. I have said that it was summer; and though it was late, daylight had not disappeared. I slunk in as though I felt the brand of guilt was upon me. I knew that, before then, all Whiskers' Rents would know of poor Peggy's evil condition. To be sure, such things were common enough there, and were passed over lightly enough; but Peggy had been—and I knew this—only a tolerated member of Whiskers' Rents community. Her industry was a tacit reproof of the systematic idleness that reigned there; and her character, compared with that of her neighbours, had until now been marvellously pure. My instinct told me what rejoicings there would be over her downfall.

So I crept along, silently and quietly, and reached Whiskers' own house without being observed. I passed our landlord's room, and looked timidly in: he was not there; but before I arrived at our garret, I

heard his thick asthmatic breathing and his rough voice on the stairs above me. He was descending, and we met on one of the broad landings of the staircase.

"Where are you going, you—you——?" his cough stopped his words in his throat for that time; but he laid his heavy hand on me.

"Going to my room," said I, trying to push by him.

"Your room!—you—you—you"—he called me ugly names this time, which I shall not repeat. "Your room! that's a good'un, that is! Where's your money to pay for it, you whelp?"

"I hadn't got any," I said, sullenly: "that was Mrs. Magrath's business."

The landlord burst into a brutal laugh, and then emitted a volley of abuse. Mrs. Magrath had got lodgings some where else, she had, and wouldn't want his any longer, he reckoned; and he was'nt going to have his good name ruined by harbouring young vagabonds and thieves. And he ended his abuse by explaining, explicitly enough for me to understand, that Peggy Magrath having got herself into trouble, and qualified herself for the "stone jug"—to wit, a prison cell—he had seized her furniture, such as it was, for the rent she owed, and had let the room to another lodger. "So the sooner you move off the better," said he, giving me a push which nearly hurled me to the bottom of the stairs; "and if you take my advice," he added, "you will make yourself scarce in Whiskers' Rents, young gentleman. We are all honest people here, you see," he added, with a scornful, taunting, and cruel laugh.

"I've got nowhere to go," I said, bursting into tears. But it was in vain to suppose that such a man as the landlord of Whiskers' Rents could be subject to such a weakness as compassion; and the next minute I was thrust into the open court.

By this time it was dusk, and I was moving off, as I supposed unperceived, with dark and despairing thoughts brooding in my heart; when a light hand was laid upon me, and a soft voice whispered close to my ear, "Roland?"

I turned, and saw Fanny by my side, crying bitterly. She had heard of poor Peggy's detection and committal, and had witnessed my ejection from my home—mine no longer.

"Roland, Roland dear, I must not stop more than a minute," she said breathlessly, wiping away her tears as well as she could; "for if father were to see me——; and yet it is only right that I am doing. Oh, Roland, what will you do?"

I didn't know, I said, and I didn't care; and I turned away my face that Fanny might not see that I too had been shedding tears.

"Oh, you should not say you don't care," said she, lovingly and earnestly: "it isn't right."

"I do say it," I exclaimed passionately; "I don't care: I don't care if I die this very minute: I don't care what becomes of me: I don't care if I go to prison:—yes, I will go there; I'll turn thief—I will."

"Roland! please don't say such wicked things," pleaded Fanny.

"And why shouldn't I say what I like?" I wanted to know, sullenly. Nobody cared for me, now Peggy was gone, and my mother was dead; and why should I care for anybody?"

"Somebody does care for you," whispered Fanny: "God cares for you. He does indeed."

"He doesn't," I exclaimed. "He doesn't know anything about me; and I don't know anything about him, and don't want to."

Oh, how shocked Fanny looked then! and she burst into fresh tears.

"If he cares for me," I went on, "what did he let Peggy go to jail for? and why didn't he strike old Whiskers dead for turning me out to starve like a dog?"

"Roland, Roland, I must go away if you talk so; I can't bear to hear you," continued my young teacher. "You mustn't: but you don't mean it, I hope; and I think you don't know what you are saying. And, Roland, here's my supper"—and she put a piece of bread in my hand; "I may give it away, for I shan't eat anything to-night: and here is a little money I had been saving up to buy a Bible with; it is all my own, and I can do without the Bible a little longer; and I am sure God won't be angry with me, and nobody else has anything to do with it. And, Roland, I'll pray for you every morning and every night when I kneel down; and you must also pray for yourself."

And in this way Fanny went on talking rapidly, as if with breathless haste, putting at the same time into my hand a little purse, closing my fingers over it with

her own, and holding them tightly, as if she were afraid I should return her gift. "And, Roland, where will you sleep to-night?" she asked, and stopped short, looking at me sadly.

Oh, anywhere; it didn't matter, I said, I wasn't particular; I should find somewhere to go to sleep, I supposed.

"Well, I must go, Roland," said my little friend; "and perhaps I shan't see you again, for father's going to move away from Whiskers' Rents to-morrow, and I don't know where we are going. But Roland, dear, I *must* tell you a story—just a little story—before I say good-bye."

It was getting so dark now that we could scarcely see each other; and she drew me a little aside, within the shadow of a narrow passage, so that we might not be interrupted; and there, in a few words, she ran over the history of Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. She had heard it from her teacher in the Sunday school, and it was just suited to me, she said. She told it in very few words, but so simply and clearly that even I, ignorant as I was, understood it. "And so you see," she went on, when she had finished the history, "God does care for poor creatures that haven't a home, nor food, nor anything; and he can help them always—always. Roland, dear, think of those words, 'Thou God seest me': you will, won't you?"

I was melted: "Yes, I will," I said.

"Can you say them now?" she asked.

Yes, I could; and I repeated the words, "Thou God seest me."

"And you will never forget them?" said she.

"Never," said I. "I'll think of them whenever I think of you."

"There's a good Roland," she said, cheerfully; "and now I must go."

And we shook hands and parted. Years, long years, were to pass away before I saw her or heard her voice again.

After she was gone, I stood for several minutes stupified with sorrow; the little purse was still in my hand, and the bread she had given me was in my pocket. Then a thought came into my mind that, two or three miles away, I knew of a dry archway where I could lie down without much fear of being disturbed; and thither I proceeded, eating the crust as I went along. It was the first meal I had eaten that day; and, dry as it was, it put new life into me.

Presently, stopping under a lamp, where there was no one near, I opened the little purse and counted the money. It was in silver, with two or three half-pence; altogether there was a little more than two shillings—poor Fanny's entire fortune. I was half disposed to run back and give it her again; but I knew that this would grieve her; and therefore, instead of this, I stored it up in my mind as a debt I had some day to discharge.

I shortly reached my archway: it was the entrance to some underground stables, and at the further end was a quantity of dry straw. I collected this, and made it into a bed in one corner, and was soon fast asleep. But I very well remember the last thought

in my mind was the story Fanny had told me ; and when I woke in the morning, the words, "Thou God seest me," were the first that rose to my lips.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHAPTER OF REFLECTIONS.

I HAVE seen it remarked in some book I have read, that if all the events in a person's life were written down, just as they happened, with all their circumstances in full, it would need a whole lifetime to record them, and a whole library to contain them. I find this to be very true. In what I have already written, I have given only a very few of the incidents of my younger life ; and in what I may yet write, I must pass over very briefly considerable periods in my history, or it will be much too long for any good purpose.

For more than a year, then, let me say, I was a homeless vagrant. If my readers will remember how suddenly I was deprived of the protection of Peggy Magrath, and cast on my own resources, they will admit that my condition was not an enviable one. At the same time, it was not altogether hopeless and desolate. True, I had not a single earthly friend. save Peggy Magrath, who was now in prison, and little Fanny, who had already done for me all that was in her power, and whom it seemed probable I should never see again. True, also, I was exceedingly ignorant ; and hitherto I had been exceedingly idle

also—*idle*, mark, not *lazy* ; but I had not been, from childhood upwards, a denizen of London streets without knowing that there were many ways in which an urchin like myself might battle for a precarious subsistence ; and I had no sooner roused myself from my straw bed under the archway, and turned out into the open air, than I began to consider what I should do with and for myself. As far as I can remember, my reflections took something like the following course :

First—I had money enough, through poor dear little Fanny's generosity, to maintain me for a week or two, even if I had nothing else to subsist upon. The sum was only two shillings and a few halfpence ; but it seemed to me quite a fortune. At any rate, I did not reckon without reflection in determining how long it could be made to last ; for I knew where cheap meals could be got—pennyworths of soup, and halfpenny sausages, and sheep's trotters, and tripe, and stale bread by the halfpenny lump. I was some distance off starvation, then, supposing—

Secondly—I should determine not to gamble. I have intimated that, in former days, I had learned to play at pitch-and-toss for halfpence ; and as long as I had poor Peggy in the background to supply me with means for indulging this vicious propensity, I took no thought for the morrow, but pocketed my gains, if I had any, or bore my losses with a studied indifference. But now that I must be my own provider as well as my own master, I determined not to trust even a halfpenny to chance. I had, in fact, become suddenly prudent ; and it would be well for gamblers of a

higher grade than I was, if in parallel, though not similar circumstances, they would come to the same conclusion and exercise the like self-control. There was another reason which strengthened and settled my determination not to gamble with this money. It had been given me by Fanny ; and I dared not use it in a way which I knew she would disapprove.

Thirdly—My poor nurse was in Newgate ; and I felt as though I was parted from her for ever. I wept bitter tears as I thought of this ; for I loved Mrs. Magrath, and she deserved my love and gratitude. But the more hopeless and desperate her condition seemed, and the greater the probability that she was lost to me, the more imperative it appeared that I should begin at once to exert myself.

Fourthly—In carrying out this resolution, two courses were open to me. I might try to get a living, either honestly or dishonestly. If I chose the latter alternative, I knew there were plenty of young rogues who would receive me into their society, and forward my views. Almost the whole juvenile population at Whiskers' Rents, for instance, were adepts in roguery. But, strange as it may seem, I had a prepossession in favour of honesty, in spite of the bad examples I had witnessed all my life long ; yes, in spite, too, of my daily share in poor Peggy's "parquises." How this was I can scarcely tell ; I know only that since the day on which I purloined that rosy-checked apple from "Mother Green's" fruit-stall, I had never committed a theft. I believe, however, that my mother's dying charge to poor Peggy, to teach me to be "honest

—honest—honest,” had sunk deep into my soul. And I must do Peggy Magrath the justice to say, that notwithstanding *her* dishonesty in the matter of “parquises,” she had taken pains to impress on my mind a due contempt of thieving; in other words, she had been faithful to her trust, and, as I have already shown, had taken positive and stringent means to nip the first buddings of this evil propensity in my nature.

Let me add also that, ignorant as I was, my late intercourse with little Fanny had awakened in my mind some better aspirations than I had before known. In my anger and despair, indeed, I had told her that I did not care what became of me, and that I would turn thief, and so on; but even then I did not exactly mean that she should take me at my word; and now that I was cooler in temper, and more hopeful, Fanny’s simple teachings came into my mind with great force; and I determined that I would do nothing which, if it came to her knowledge, would bring sorrow to her heart. The words ran in my mind too—those last words that she taught me—“Thou God seest me”; and though I did not know, and could scarcely have comprehended, their fullest import, they inspired me with a salutary awe.

Thus I was driven to the alternative of trying to obtain a living honestly; and to do this, I must set to work. True, there was another expedient I might adopt, which, though bordering upon dishonesty, did not exactly and necessarily pass the forbidden bounds: I refer to the trade of begging. Possibly I could have

begged successfully, for I had an innocent, childish countenance, and I had not lived the greater part of my life at Whiskers' Rent without having learned theoretically something of the *mumper's* trade. But here the remembrance of Peggy Magrath's example and opinions did me good service : she had a sovereign contempt for beggary, and had inoculated me with a sturdy dislike to it also. Moreover, I had not lost sight of the fact that my mother—poor as she was—had obtained a living by honest industry ; and the knowledge of her decent origin had of late inspired me with a kind of vague ambition to rise, by honest means, to the height from which she had sunk, and as much higher as possible. Well, the time had come for me to begin putting my resolution into effect ; and I *would* begin, that very day, to earn money—if I could.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAST UPON MY OWN RESOURCES, I EARN AN HONEST LIVING.—AN ADVENTURE AT A CHURCH DOOR.—ANOTHER ADVENTURE WHICH NEARLY ENDS MY HISTORY.

CAST upon my own resources, then, I determined to begin at once ; and to brace my resolution to the utmost, I determined also that I would not, if I could avoid it, break in upon dear little Fanny's treasure, which I very carefully secured and concealed in the safest pocket of my dress.

In little less than an hour, I was in Covent Garden market. There, after being jostled about, and abused, and rebuffed for many weary hours, I succeeded at last ; I earned a penny—how it does not signify ; but it was honestly. Oh, how my eyes glistened ! how I could have danced for joy ! how I hugged that penny in my hand ! how I *hanselled* it !

This last action of mine—this hanselling, which I need not describe, but which was as well understood and practised in Covent Garden market and elsewhere, fifty years ago, as it is now—attracted the attention of my temporary employer, who was a good-natured looking salesman.

“Is that the first money you’ve *yarned* to day, boy ?” asked he.

I told him it was.

“Well,” said he, “your are a tidy-looking chap : would you like to *yarn* [earn] another ?”

I told him yes ; and he set me to work for another hour. And then he paid me the second penny.

“Sharp set ?” said he, inquiringly. “Hongry, are you ?” He was seated on a basket turned upside down, with a great hunch of bread and a slice of fat pork in one hand, and a formidable looking knife in the other.

“Yes,” said I, wistfully : and well I might be, for, excepting poor Fanny’s crust, I had eaten nothing that day or the day before.

“Thought so,” said he : “boys can always eat, and ought too ;” and parting his meal with me, he looked

on complacently and sympathizingly, while I ate to my heart's content.

"Please," said I, when I had done, "will you give me another job to morrow?"

"Shan't be here to-morrow," he said: "come again on Saturday, and I'll see. You'd better come *yarly* [early]; there'll be a better chance. Come as soon as 'tis light."

I thanked him, and promised, and went my way with a glad and grateful heart.

"I wonder whether it is true that God cares for me as Fanny said," I thought to myself, as I lay down in my former resting-place that night.

And now having given an account of my first day's experiences at earning a living, I shall pass rapidly over the next three hundred and odd.

I did not resort every day to Covent Garden market. Sometimes I might be found at Smithfield, sometimes at Billingsgate—the old Billingsgate market, very unlike the present one. I found my way into mews, and became in time cunning in "horseflesh" and was looked upon by stable-men, ostlers, and grooms, as a handy lad who might be trusted with a variety of small jobs, such as harness cleaning and polishing, and the like. This was, in one respect, a happy connexion for me, as it gave me the freedom of the warm stable in bad weather, when I had nothing to do, as well as provided me with a more secure and comfortable sleeping-place in a commodious hayloft than my old archway. I need say nothing of the teaching I picked up, either in stable-yards or markets, except

that it was very, very different from kind little Fanny's.

Still, however, I did not forget my good little teacher, and would, at any time, have given a whole week's earnings if I could have seen her again, even for a five minutes' interview; and the words she had spoken to me just before we parted had never slipped entirely out of my mind, "Thou God seest me!" How often did these words check me when temptation was put in my way! And Fanny's confident assertion that God cared for me—could I disbelieve it when I saw how, from day to day, I was enabled to earn my daily bread honestly?

Yes, honestly; for whatever faults I had besides, I had stuck to my resolution to be honest; and, after a time, this fact began to turn to my advantage. Men who at first met my advances with suspicion and disdain, and roughly bade me go about my business when I asked them to give me leave to earn a penny, found out at last that I was to be trusted, and changed their tone. They might, some of them, be rogues themselves; yet they had a regard for honesty, for all that.

Let me add, too, not in self-praise, but as a matter-of-fact—that I carried out my resolution to give up gambling. Perhaps it was that, having tasted the sweets of honest industry, I lost a relish for idle gains; or it may be that I began to hoard my money, and to love hoarding it too well to risk its loss. In truth, my finances, after a few weeks' struggling and roughing, really began to look flourishing. Instead of infringing

upon Fanny's gift, I had added somewhat to the store. Indeed, as I had no rent to pay, and trusted to the generosity of my stable acquaintances to keep me supplied in cast-off garments of one sort or other, as fast as my old ones became unwearable, it would have been almost strange if I had not in process of time become a capitalist—a very small one, certainly. I wisely kept the knowledge of this to myself, however. I did not even carry my savings about with me, but found a safe hiding-place for them in the roof of my favourite hayloft.

To a great extent, also, I avoided idle companionship. My former boyish acquaintances of Whiskers' Rents were lost to me, for I cautiously avoided that neighbourhood; not so much because it was a very wicked place, as that I should there have poor Peggy's mishap thrown in my teeth. To say the truth, it was a loss I cared very little about. I was not squeamish; and the new connexion I had formed was not, in general, of a character to make me so; but I wished to keep honest and industrious, as the only sure means of bettering my condition: and though I had never heard of "The Proverbs of Solomon," and had not the slightest idea that he or any one else had ever said or written that "a companion of fools shall be destroyed," the sentiment thus put into words was impressed on my mind, and had been from the day when poor Peggy warned me so emphatically that if I consorted with that "bad and bould" Sloppy Stevens, I should soon become as "bad and bould" as he was.

And now that I have written poor Peggy's name, I may as well say here that I had taken such pains as a boy could to learn her fate. To this end I had hung about the doors of the Old Bailey Sessions-house while the trials were going on, and even pushed my way, on two successive days, into the hall. At length my curiosity was set at rest by finding that she was sentenced to two years imprisonment—a lenient sentence, perhaps, when it is considered that at that time the crime of stealing from a dwelling-house, to the value of forty shillings, was not only punishable, but sometimes punished with *death*.

Apart from my boyish concern for poor Peggy, I was not altogether unhappy in my new position. “In all labour there is profit”; and I really enjoyed my life of honest labour, and the feeling of independence it created. To be sure I sometimes envied the rich and well-dressed and well-fed people whom I met; for I had not the opportunity of observing, and I was never told—and, if I had been told, I could scarcely have believed—that they were many of them very miserable with all their wealth; but it was not hopeless envy which was lighted up in my bosom, but rather a healthy sort of emulation. Why should I not be as rich as they? Ah! why not?

This question, I remember, was first put tangibly before me by my Covent Garden market friend and employer. From the day of my making his acquaintance, this kindly disposed man seemed to take a fancy to me; and one day, when his business was slack and mine also, he got me to sit down by his side and tell

him my history. I told it without reserve, and when it was done, he clapped me on the back encouragingly.

"I thought as how you was made of good stuff somehow," said he, "and now I'm sure on't; and I'll tell you summat that'll heart you up. You mayn't think that I am very rich," he continued; "but you musn't take everybody by their looks. Rich or poor, I've got a snug farm of my own out there"—and he jerked his great fat thumb, in a careless sort of way, in a certain direction—"and a few score golden guineas besides; and I've got a pretty house of my own over my head, and a nice little wife into the bargain, and all that sort of thing. Yet it wasn't much above twenty years ago, boy, that I was a poor chap, about your age and bigness, and hadn't a friend in the world, and not a penny in the world—nothing in the world to start with but just a dozen bundles of radishes in an old basket—there!"

"And how did you get your money and all that, sir?" I ventured to ask.

"Honesty did it, Roland Leigh," said he; "honesty and industry; and—ay, I mustn't forget the other thing, as the old 'ooman at home tells me often, very often indeed—honesty, industry, and God's blessing—there!"

"And do you think I could get so rich, too?" I wanted to know.

"Dunno why you shouldn't, Roland," said he. "Honesty, mind."

"And industry," said I, briskly.

"And God's blessing," added he, solemnly. And

there, for that time, the conversation ended, for a customer came up. But I had got new light, any how ; and from that time I fancied that the market gardener and salesman kept an eye upon me with a kind of interest in my welfare. This was an additional motive to my continuance in an honest course.

I was saying, however, when I broke off into this digression, that I was far from being unhappy at the time of which I am writing, though I was outwardly as neglected and dirty a looking little fellow as was, here or there, to be met with ; for as cleanliness was not one of Peggy's virtues, neither was it one of my requisites of comfort. As to winter's cold and summer's heat, rain, hail, frost, snow—I took them as they came, and grew hardy either upon or in spite of them, I hardly know which. Luckily, as I then thought—providentially as I may now, with reason and thankfulness, say—I was strong and healthy ; and I fancy that my constant activity and even my daily avocations in the open air contributed to this result. And so, the year of which I am writing passed away.

Have I been sounding my own small praises in this chapter ? No, no ; I have only been giving a faithful glimpse of the bright side of my character at this time ; and what character has not a comparatively bright side ? But there was a dark side, too—oh, how dark ! Ignorance, folly, pollution, sin !—how can I dwell upon the outward manifestations of an evil and corrupt nature, without withdrawing the curtain from scenes which had better be left in darkness ?

I have spoken of the extraordinary effect produced upon me by hearing the solemn, swelling tones of a church organ. I often thought of those feelings with delight ; and once I ventured to the door of that very same church, during service—looking askance at the awful bone-house as I went through the churchyard, with no very pleasant feelings—and listened to the solemn music. But this was not my only inducement in venturing so near the lion's mouth : I hoped that perhaps I might catch a glimpse of kind little Fanny ; and I ensconced myself in a safe corner, near the church, at the time that the Sunday School children trooped by. But Fanny was not among them. I made sure of this, and concluded that she and her father were removed so far away, that her connection with the school had been necessarily brought to a close.

After this I never went near that church again ; but as Sunday was a disengaged day with me, I often lingered near other churches, and obtained the pleasure I sought—that delicious music ! On one occasion I was so entranced, that unconsciously I stole up to the very porch of the building. It was a fine old church ; and I have more than once, in later years, trodden the very same stones, on the same pavement, to meet with a very different reception.

Well, I stole up the porch : the door was open, for it was summer, and I could see the congregation within, and caught a glimpse of the surpliced reader in the desk. At that moment I forgot how ragged and dirty I was—what an outcast of society, what a

suspicious little wretch—and I was 'about to enter, when I was stopped in my stealthy progress by an awfully stern man, in beadle's coat, with a stick, who laid his hand heavily on me, and pushed me into the yard, and hurried me into the street.

"You ouldacious wagabond? what do you want, lurking about here?" he asked, very angrily and magisterially.

"I didn't mean any harm," I said, shrinkingly.

"Oh no, I dare say not" he sneered; "such as you never mean any harm! You young pickpocket, I know you; so you had better be off."

I was glad to "be off" with sound and unaching bones; and I was taught a lesson which I did not soon forget, namely, that in the eyes of some, at least, the Christian religion was never intended for "vagabonds"—only for well-dressed respectability. The conclusion at which I arrived was a wrong one, and I have learned a different lesson since then; but it was a natural one for me to imbibe at that time.

Yes. I thank God, through Jesus Christ, that I have learned a different lesson since then, even that "the Son of man came to seek and to save such as are *lost*": but how often, since that knowledge came to me, have I put together the gentle, loving, and gracious words of the MASTER, and the harsh and grating words of one of those employed about his sanctuary. "COME UNTO ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," says Jesus; "and I will give you rest."—"You had better be off," said the underling; "what business have you here?" So when they

brought little children to the blessed One, that he might lay his hands on them, the disciples said, "Take them away:" but HE said, "Forbid them not to come unto me." And so, when the Saviour was moved with compassion on seeing a great multitude, as sheep having no shepherd, there were those who ought to have known better, but who said, "Send the multitude away." Ah, but the disciple is not above his Lord—the servant above his Master! I have found out this, and much besides, since then.

I was one day at Smithfield, and had been tolerably successful in earning pence—for it was more than a year after I had been first cast on my own resources, and I was tolerably well known—when a horse-dealer called me.

"Here, Rowley, mount her, and show off her paces to this gen'lman."

The "her" was a tall mare, that the dealer was desirous of selling; the gen'lman was the customer. The animal was not only tall, but, as I soon found to my cost, vicious also. I should have cared little for this, however, if I had known it; for I had been accustomed to back vicious horses by this time, and knew that I had a firm seat. I sprang, therefore, upon the back of the beast, and, grasping the halter, made ready for a trot. The dealer's whip gave a sharp crack behind, and the mare started—not at a trot, however, nor at a gallop; this I might have reckoned upon; but she sprang on one side, jumped, plunged, reared, kicked, and shook herself in savage rage, while the

spectators hurried out of the way. In another moment, the animal started off furiously, and I heard those whom we left behind, laughing and vociferating; but their voices were soon lost to me. Hitherto I had managed to keep my seat bravely; but while I was congratulating myself on this fact, the vicious animal suddenly and instantaneously stopped short, and I was thrown violently over her head, and pitched upon the rough stones with almost fatal force. Happily, I fell, not upon my head, but on my outstretched arms first; the fall was thus broken, and I retained my senses just sufficiently to be aware that I was picked up by the by-standers. The movement gave me intense pain, and I screamed out an agonizing cry.

"Gently, Bill," said one: "it's little Rowley; and he's smashed all to bits."

"Arm's broke," said another; "see how it hangs. Collar-bone and ribs too, most likely. and head cut open. A shame to put him on an 'oss like that."

"Take him to Bartlemy's!" said another; and forthwith I felt myself carefully lifted on to a shutter, and knew that I was on the way to the neighbouring hospital. Then my reeling senses departed, my eyes closed, and I knew nothing more that happened till I found myself stripped, stretched on a mattress, and under the hands of the hospital surgeons.



MY ADVENTURE IN SMITHFIELD.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOSPITAL.

THE injuries I had received were very severe. How long I remained insensible I cannot tell ; I remember only that, when consciousness returned, it was night, and I found myself on a comfortable bed, but so encumbered with straps and bandages as to be scarcely able to move. I managed, however, to raise my head, and perceived, by the light of a few dim lamps, that I was not alone. I was in a large, long room, with beds, like that on which I was lying, ranged at regular intervals along the side. These were nearly all occupied, and one or two attendants were moving to and fro with noiseless steps. Occasionally a groan, as from one in pain, or a deep-drawn sigh, broke the stillness of night ; and then I knew that I was in the ward of a hospital.

My slight movement was not unnoticed. One of the nurses came to my side, and, in response to my prayer for drink, lifted my head and administered a cool and refreshing draught. I drank deeply, and then, falling back on my bolster, relapsed into the unconsciousness of deep slumber in which, however, I was visited by frightful dreams.

When I woke again it was daylight, and for the first time I recalled, though indistinctly, the particulars of my accident ; and then a trouble came into my

mind. My clothes had of course been removed, and with them I missed Fanny's gift. Anxiously asking for it, the little purse was put into my hand. After that time I had no further care.

I shall not dwell at any length on the disinterested attentions I received, and the surgical skill with which I was treated. Let me say only that the poor homeless outcast experienced kindnesses, the recollection of which the events of a long after life have not effaced. I know not how long I received this care, for time at first stole away unheeded by me. Some weeks, however, must have elapsed between the day of my accident and that on which I was assisted to leave my couch. From that time my recovery was more rapid.

One day, soon after my release from bed, I was sitting by an open window in the ward, looking out on the square below, when another partially recovered patient seated himself by my side. He was an aged man, and still very feeble; but his voice sounded pleasantly as he spoke, though at first I little heeded it.

"You have had no one to see you since you have been laid up," he said. I should explain, that at certain hours visitors were admitted into the hospital; and there were none others in our ward, except the old man and myself, who had not occasionally seen parents, or sisters, or wives, or children, or friends. "How is it you have had no friend to come and see how you are getting on?" he wished to know.

"I reckon there's nobody cares much about me,"

said I, still looking out at the window, and paying more attention to the active movements of a number of brisk dirty London sparrows, hopping about the open space below, than to the words of my fellow-patient.

"You have a father or mother, my lad, haven't you?" he continued.

"No, I have not, nor a brother or sister either, nor uncle, aunt, or cousin," I replied, ungraciously.

"So young and yet so friendless!" said the old man, with a sigh and a look of commiseration. "Have you never heard of One who is the Friend and Father of the fatherless?"

No, not that I remembered, I said. I did not suppose that I had.

"You can read?" asked he.

"A precious little, master," said I. "What's the odds?" I added.

"Will you let me read to you?" the old man asked.

He might if he liked, I replied; and he took from his pocket a small well-worn book, which I afterwards knew to be the New Testament, and opened it.

There was something in the poor old patient's tone and manner which, in spite of my chilling apathy, insensibly and gradually attracted me. I left off watching the sparrows, and fixed my eyes upon him. Perhaps my previous source of amusement suggested it to him; but however this might be, he read to me portions of one of the gracious Saviour's addresses to his disciples:—

" 'I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of

them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God: but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. * * *

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

“If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

“And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

“That’s like what Fanny used to talk about,” said I, musingly, when the old man came to a pause.

“And who is Fanny?” he asked, looking up from the book.

“Oh! it doesn’t signify,” said I. “You don’t know anything about her, I reckon.”

“I dare say not,” replied the old man, mildly; “and it does not signify, as you say. I beg your

pardon for seeming curious. And so you have heard this before, have you ?”

“Something like it—yes.”

“Then you do know that there is a Friend in heaven who cares for us ?” rejoined the old patient.

“No, I don’t,” said I, promptly ; and, moving off, I left him to himself and his book. He looked after me, however, as I thought, with a kindly, pitying air ; and then he went on reading silently.

But his words and the words of the book had moved me more than I cared to acknowledge ; and, on the following day, I purposely put myself in the old man’s way, when our conversation was resumed by his saying,—

“I hope I did not offend you yesterday ?”

No, I was not offended, I said, bluntly : why should he think I was offended ?

“You went away as though I had said something you did not approve,” he replied, mildly ; “but I dare say I was mistaken.”

“No you were not,” I said, “I did not want to hear any more then ; but—”

“But what, my boy ?”

“If you wouldn’t mind reading a bit now, I should like it,” said I.

“It will be a great pleasure to me,” replied the old man, with a bright, kindly smile which went to my heart ; it put me so much in the mind of dear little Fanny’s smile when she was pleased ; and no wonder, for the smile was the index of a loving Christian heart which is not the case with some smiles.

"I will read to you as much and as long as you like," said the old man; "but may I say a word or two first?"

"Yes," said I, "if you won't make game of me."

"I won't do that; I hope I am not so wicked as to think such a thing as that," he replied earnestly; and then he went on—"you told me yesterday that you did not know you had a Friend in heaven; but you have heard of the great God who made you, have you not?"

"Fanny has told me about him," I said, involuntarily; for both then and afterwards, whenever I heard anything really good, dear Fanny would come into my mind; "and she taught me to say, 'Thou God seest me,'" I added.

"Ah! and I must not ask you who Fanny is: but whoever she may be, she has taught you a good lesson, and a great truth. And did she not tell you too, that God not only sees you, but cares for you?"

I could not deny that she had told me this.

"Well then, you see, you have a Friend in heaven," continued the old man. "Now I want to ask you another question; may I?"

He spoke so kindly and meekly that if he had wished to ask me a dozen questions, in the mood I was then in, I should have answered them as well and as truthfully as I could. I did not tell him so; but I suppose my looks gave consent, for he said next,—

"Have you ever been where the gospel is preached?"

I could not answer this; I did not know what he meant by the gospel, and I told him so.

The old patient looked pityingly upon me, I thought. "I mean," he said, "have you ever been to a church or a chapel?"

Yes I had, I told him, colouring up—I had been twice, and the second time I was dragged out of it and locked up in the bone-house, and afterwards beaten with a horrid cane; and I told him how this came to pass.

"So, so," he said, shaking his head; "it was a pity, a sad pity: poor boy!" this he seemed to be saying to himself; then he added, "but, you see you brought this punishment upon yourself, in part, by being revengeful, which was wrong; though the way they served you wasn't Christ's way, either. But you should not be driven away from the dear Lord and from his house because of this: it happened a good while ago, did it not?"

"Yes," I told him; "more than a year."

"And you have never been since?"

"Yes, I have," I replied; and then I told the kind old man how I had been driven away from another church door, "as if I was a dog, or a thief," I added, indignantly.

My old friend was very sorrowful. "Ah!" he said to himself, "the Lord did not do so. He preached the gospel to the poor and perishing, he did. Well," he continued, "I won't ask you any more questions now, my poor boy; but I'll read a little bit to you." And then, taking the book from his pocket again, he began to read. He chose the parable of the lost sheep, and then went on and read about the prodigal son;

and before he had come to the end of that fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, tears were running down my cheeks.

The old patient saw how I was affected ; and he laid his hand affectionately on mine—"Roland," he said (for I had told him my name) "never mind in future what anybody does or says to you, to keep you away from the dear Saviour, and from your Father in heaven. Think of the lost sheep the shepherd went after, and of the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repents, and of the good Father seeing his poor wretched boy when he was a great way off, and running to meet him, and falling upon his neck and kissing him."

Our conversation ended here, for it was interrupted ; but it was not without some effect on my mind, for I lay awake that night thinking about the kind Shepherd and the loving Father, and wishing—wishing—wishing, till I fell asleep. I little thought that the kind Shepherd was even then seeking for me—poor me ; and that my life in the hospital, and my talks with the poor old Christian I met there, were the ways by which he was finding me.

I shall not any further detail very particularly the course of the temporary acquaintance I had thus formed. I may say, however, that after the intercourse of another day or two, I gave the old man the outlines of my past history, and he told me the longer story of his life. It was, as I remember, in some respects a sorrowful one ; and he had nothing to look forward to in life but poverty, for he had no earthly friends ; but

then, as he said, he had a Friend above, who had promised never to forsake him in this life ; and he had a good hope of a better life in another world, and that was enough.

The old man showed me, too, that God had not been unmindful of me, though I had known and thought so little about him. It was God, he said, who had put it into poor Peggy Magrath's heart to be kind to me when my mother died ; and who, since then, had helped me to earn my living honestly. Did I not think so ?

I did not know about that, I answered ; for my old 'don't-care' spirit had returned, though not so strongly as before ; and how was it about being thrown from the horse, and having my bones broken ? Why didn't He, if he was so much a friend—

The old man gently stopped me short. I did not know yet, he replied, what my accident might lead to. I could not tell that I should not some day see that it was the most blessed thing that could have happened to me. And as to the question I had begun to ask, he would ask another or two : for instance, how was it that I got let off with broken bones only, when I might have been killed outright ? and how was it that I had had so much kindness shown to me in the hospital ? Was not all that God's doing ?

The ward of a busy crowded hospital is not the most convenient place for long seasons of communion ; but our conversations were never long ; and the old man took care not to weary me with religion. But every day he had a few words to say to me ; and I

heard from his lips the story of redemption by the Son of God ; the life of the Saviour on earth, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; his compassion for the ruined and lost ; his death on the cross ; his glorious resurrection and ascension ; his eternal salvation freely offered to the guilty and hell-deserving ; and the promised assistance of God's Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus.

All this was pleasant to me, for it revived in my mind the impressions of little Fanny's teaching.

But these opportunities for gaining instruction were not of long continuance. More rapidly than my old friend and fellow patient, I regained strength ; and on a certain summer's day I received my dismissal from the hospital, cured. There was little time for leave-taking.

CHAPTER XVI.

TYPHUS FEVER AT WHISKERS' RENTS.

It was a pleasant change to me—to leave behind me the walls of old Bartholomew's Hospital, benevolent as they were, and to find myself once more free and strong. If you, reader, have known what it is to endure weeks of wearisome confinement on a bed of pain, or in a sick chamber, however replete with comforts ; and have, after that, experienced the blessing of health recovered and strength restored ; and if you can recall the feelings of ecstasy with

which you first re-trod the earth beneath the open sky ; you can understand what my feelings were as I lightly stepped across Smithfield, and, without waiting to sentimentalize over the spot on which I had been within an inch of losing my life, hastened toward my old quarters in the Mews.

I stopped short, however, before I was half way there ; for I suddenly remembered that my old nurse's term of punishment had expired, and I longed to see her again. I felt convinced that she would have returned to Whiskers' Rents if only in search for me ; and I instantly changed my course. I could as well return to-morrow as to-day to my old employments, I thought, especially as a small sum of money had been given me on leaving the hospital, in compassion for my apparently destitute condition ; and my little hoard in the stable would be safe at any time—I felt sure of that.

An hour or so of brisk walking took me to Whiskers' Rents, and then I slacked my pace and looked around.

“ Ah ! it has a queer look about it, hasn't it youngster ? ” said a pallid, dirty fellow in ragged attire, whom I did not know at first, but afterwards recognised as an old inhabitant. He was leaning against a post, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, while a short black pipe was stuck in his mouth. He had spoken to me as to a stranger ; but when I turned towards him he remembered me.

“ Hallo ! Roley Poley, is it you ? Why, how you are growed . but, I say, it has a queer look, hasn't it ? ”

"What do you mean?" said I.

"Mean! where's your eyes, boy? Don't you see as half the houses is shut up? A pretty time *we've* had of it lately, I can tell you," added he, with a sardonic leer.

"Why, what has been the matter?" I wished to know.

"Look at me," said the man, "and that'll tell you. I've had it, and my old 'ooman had it; and she is gone off with it, *she* is—" I repeat the man's words, only omitting the oaths and imprecations which, during the whole conversation, polluted his language; and I do not remember that the slightest indication of regret was visible on his countenance as he spoke of his wife's death—"and my young 'uns took it. *they* did, and some got better, and some didn't; and little Kate—you knowed little Kate, Roley?"

Kate Sutton! merry little Kate! an old playmate of mine, though a year or two younger than I! Yes I remembered little Kate, I said.

"Kate's took it too," said the man, in a slightly changed and husky voice, for there was a lingering spark of human affection even in his hardened heart; "and she's got it bad now, right on her, and the doctor says she can't get over the day."

"Poor little Kate!" I said, without well knowing what I said.

"If you are sorry, so am I," said the man; "but I arn't a-going to cry about it," he added, as it seemed, in desperation; "and it's all the same through the Rents. There's a house"—and he pointed to one

nearly opposite the spot on which we were standing—"there was three took out of it last week, and five the week afore, and two the week afore that, and all the rest has got it. And there's another," he went on, pointing to a house closely shut up—and by this time I had noticed that several of the houses in the neighbourhood were thus closed—"there's another: all was took out in a lump. I say," he continued, with a savage leer and grin, which, if it did not denote mental imbecility, which I trust it did, gave sad evidence of hardened indifference—"a prime time this is for the sexton and the grave-digger, eh?"

"Are you talking about death?" I asked, with a start of terror; for I had listened almost mechanically, without well knowing what the man was saying, or what meaning there was in his words.

"What else should I be talking about?" he wanted to know. "'Tis all we have had to talk about at Whiskers' of late," he added; and then relapsing into a short silence, he puffed away at his short pipe furiously.

Meanwhile, I took a rapid inventory of the scene before my eyes. My two years of absence from the spot had not increased the charms of Whiskers' Rents. The locality seemed far more filthy and degraded in its outward aspect than when I last visited it; in addition to which there was about it a sort of unaccustomed stagnation, dreary to witness. A few children of various ages were listlessly playing on the streets and pavements, or curiously poking and prying among the heaps of vegetable filth which lay rotting and

fermenting at every dozen steps ; a few women were standing at open doors, in every variety of attire, or rather of disattire ; others were flitting to and fro ; here and there a man was visible, lounging like my acquaintance, with the same air of lazy dissoluteness and reckless indifference to the horrors around : but no sounds of hilarity were heard ; and almost every countenance I looked upon seemed gaunt with famine or sickness, or both. A heavy, stagnant, sickening atmosphere hung over the place, and communicated its baleful influence to every spectre-like inhabitant I saw. Many of the wretched dwellings, as I have said, were closed ; and all signs of active life seemed banished from the rest, with one exception only : a pretty constant stream of the ill-fated population flowed into and from that one gaudy shop at the entrance to the Rents—it was a gin shop.

All this and more I had time to observe before the man Sutton spoke to me again ; and then, in a listless, sleepy sort of way, he asked me what I thought of it ?

Falteringly I answered this question by asking another : “ What is come to the place ? ”

He burst into a horrible laugh. “ What’s come to it ? ” says he ; “ why, fever’s come to it—a nice, pleasant, comfortable, warm sort of fever—typhus, that’s all, youngster. You’d like to catch it, wouldn’t you ? There comes another coffin,” he continued, renewing his awful merriment. “ That’s for old King Cole hisself, that is—old Whiskers. He’s got his rent to pay at last, he has ; ” and then the hardened fellow broke out into a volley of abuse, a chuckle, and a song

in almost the same breath. At this moment a screeching voice was heard from one of the windows of one of the miserable habitations, calling my companion by name.

"What's to pay now?" he demanded fiercely in reply.

"She's gone!" said the woman, in a tone intended, at any rate, to be a sorrowful one—perhaps it really was. "Poor little Kate—dear angel!"

The man gave a sudden start, and his countenance for a moment worked spasmodically; but he soon returned to his natural or acquired obduracy, and turned off in the direction of a public house.

It has ever since seemed strange to me that I had then no apprehension of taking the fatal disease which had evidently turned Whiskers' Rents into a desolation; and I can account for my insensibility in no other way than that my thoughts were preoccupied with anxiety for poor Peggy Magrath. Intent on finding her, I pursued my way up the court, and, pushing open the half-closed door, entered.

There was a bustle in the little room—the former den of our old landlord—and I looked in: the undertaker's men were at their doleful work. One glance was enough. I sprang up the filthy stairs, and entered room after room of that hideous lodging-house in my unsuccessful search. They were mostly empty at that time; probably the dread of the fever had driven away such of the lodgers as had the means of removing to other quarters, and had kept back new ones from filling up their places. In one room, however, into which

I stumbled, a fearful scene presented itself. On a heap of foul straw, in one corner, lay a woman and two children, wrapped, as it seemed, in sleep, yet with eyes half open, and covered with a glassy film. It needed not a second glance to tell me that theirs was a sleep from which would be no timely awaking—they were dead; but not dead was the puny infant, nestling itself weakly on the cold, uncovered bosom of its mother, and seeking to gain attention to its wants by its feeble cries and moans.

I turned and fled. A woman met me on the stairs; she would have suffered me to pass unquestioned and unnoticed, but I stopped her, and told her what I had seen.

"It is a lie!" said she fiercely, in reply to my hurried explanation. "Dead!" she repeated, with a mocking laugh. "We don't die at all in Whiskers' Rents now-a-days, young man—we are only being killed off, that's all."

"Killed off!"

"Ah, killed off; that's plain English, isn't it? Say murdered, if you like it better—murdered with fever.*

* "The people never die here, they are murdered by the fever," was the exclamation of one inhabitant in — Street. I could not deny the assertion; the state of the back yards and of the street was enough to breed, and nourish, and mature a pestilence. Truly, indeed, are such convictions at the bottom of much discontent, truly do they endanger the fabric of society; and the danger is the greater, as the convictions are founded on truth and bitter experience. It is impossible but that habits of cleanliness, decency, and self-respect, must be sacrificed by the condition of things which at present exist. It is melancholy, but almost to be expected, that discontent and disputes should arise, and that working men, finding their homes made wretched and uncomfortable, and surrounded with nuisances, should leave them for the public-house, there to learn, and soon to indulge in, habits of intemperance, which indulgence soon leads to vicious propensities.

And you must be in an uncommon hurry to be murdered too," she continued, looking curiously and suspiciously at me as she spoke, "to be coming here prying about—for no good, I'll warrant, by the looks of you."

My looks were certainly not in my favour; for my garments were ragged enough, though perhaps equal to any Whiskers' Rents could ordinarily have produced. But I answered meekly, I believe, first that I was in no hurry to leave the world by any process; and next, that I was in that particular part of it for no harm—that I was, in fact, in search of one whom I supposed might be a lodger at Whiskers'.

"And who may that one be?" demanded the woman, in a more civil tone, and looking at me in the dim, uncertain light which struggled on to the old staircase through a partially blocked-up window.

"Mrs. Magrath," said I.

that, in their turn, give rise to a large class of crimes. It is perfectly true that, on analysis, numbers of crimes are clearly traceable to the low state of physical comforts of the poor, to the filth which surrounds their dwellings, and to the absence of facilities for its removal: these agencies depress the energies, and lead to intemperance through the desire to impart false strength to a debilitated, physical and nervous system; to a disregard of all moral and social ties; to disease and premature decay. From my personal investigations into the state of the dwellings of the poor, I am more and more convinced that the sum of wretchedness, of misery, of destitution, of slow corroding care, of wasting disease and early death, which they endure through a want of cleanliness—a neglect cruelly attributed to themselves, but which might be thrown back as a bitter taunt to those who really cause it, namely, the middle and upper classes—forms a most serious charge, for which these last are answerable to Him who placed them in their various positions in society. As a people, we deserve to be visited with pestilence, if we longer neglect the great social duties we owe to the poorer classes congregated in our towns."—*The late Hector Gavin, M.D., in "Sanitary Rambling."*

"And you are Roland Leigh, then," returned the woman. "I know you now, though I didn't at first; and you ought to remember me; but that doesn't matter; only I would recommend you to be out of this as soon as you can."

I couldn't go till I had found my old nurse, if she were at Whiskers, I said.

"She is not here, and I wish I was not," said the woman. "But stop; now I think of it, I caught a sight of her more than a month ago, along with old Whiskers; but I haven't seen her since; and what is become of her I cannot tell. Perhaps old Whiskers might tell you if he was alive; but he isn't."

I could learn nothing beyond this; and so after an hour or more spent in fruitless inquiries, I turned my back on Whiskers' Rents.

CHAPTER XVII.

I DREAM A DREAM.

It was not until I had emerged from the gloomy atmosphere, and escaped the faint, sickly, charnel-house effluvia of Whiskers' Rents, that I thought much of the danger to which I had exposed myself in my unavailing search for Peggy Magrath. Then, not only did fear lend wings to my flight, but imagination conjured up perhaps unreal terrors. I began to fancy myself already infected with the fatal fever, and felt a deadly sickness creeping over me. But, happily,

it *was* fancy ; and a draught of water from the nearest pump, and the crust of a penny loaf which I purchased, revived me.

But I felt disinclined to return immediately to my old haunts of industry ; and, without any particular design beyond that of passing two or three vacant hours, I bent my steps towards, and turned into, the Park.

It was just about the time of day when people in the fashionable world were beginning to show signs of life ; and I lay down on the dusty grass within sight of one of the drives, and watched the various equipages as they passed rapidly by. I think I am not wrong in saying that these were among the bitterest hours I had ever experienced. I had, as my readers know, had some acquaintance with suffering and sorrow ; had felt hunger and cold, and physical pain in other forms ; had been destitute and friendless ; but all this I had borne with a sort of stolid indifference, compared with the anguish of mind I endured as I saw around me so much that seemed calculated to make life happy and joyous, and felt how wide was the gulf between the gay and fluttering throng and myself. I did not know then, what I have since learned, and know now, that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” ; and I should scarcely have comprehended the fact, had I then been told that beneath the rich clothing of the occupants of those luxurious carriages, and the gay exterior and bearing of the riders on those prancing, pampered horses, were some hearts

brimful of wretchedness, hatred, malice, and every evil passion.

Alas! envy and hatred were gnawing at my heart then. My thoughts and aspirations were active, and becoming more and more matured; and how few had there been to guide them aright! I had just witnessed scenes of misery, too, from which almost all those whom I was now envying would have shrunk with cowardice and horror—perhaps with scorn. I had just been disappointed also; and I felt, almost for the first time, that I was alone in the world, and desolate. If I had been killed outright by the violent fall from the horse which had, only for a time, disabled me—and I was wicked and desperate enough almost to wish that I *had* been killed—there would have been none to mourn for me; for who cared whether I lived or died? And if I had caught the fever at Whiskers' Rents—and likely enough I had—there would not be one to shed a tear for my loss.

In those dreary hours—strange that I had not experienced these sensations in the hospital, but I had not—in those dreary hours, with everything around me pleasant and soothing, if not inviting to the senses; and with the blue sky of an afternoon in summer over my head, scarcely obscured by a cloud of London smoke; and with a gentle breeze fanning my hot cheeks; oh, how indescribably wretched I was! In those dreary hours my past life and misfortunes forced themselves vividly into remembrance. The scene of my poor mother's death; her former sufferings and injuries; my grandfather's unnatural disown-

ment of me ; the severe and mistaken discipline to which I had been subjected at the Sunday school ; all these, with a thousand other troubles which had befallen me in my past short life, seemed to burn within me, and to gather round them a brood of harpies, stirring me up to deeds of desperation. Oh, if it were but in my power—only in my power !

But what had become of the softening influences of my poor old hospital friend's conversations ? Truly those kindly, evangelical teachings were forgotten then. The seed had been sown, certainly ; but it lay buried now for a little while.

At length, wearied in body and oppressed in mind, I closed my eyes, and sleep gradually came over me. I slept, and dreamed. I was far, far away, I knew not where. I had been in sore bodily conflict—was wounded, bruised, and faint ; my tongue clave to my mouth for thirst, and I tried to cry out for help, but could not : then I sank insensible on to the rocky, parched ground.

I dreamed again the same dream in continuance, and yet another : my head was pillowed on a soft lap, and when I looked up, my mother was bending over me with a benignant, blessed smile. Her lips moved softly, and I listened ; but no audible words fell on my longing ear. But that smile was enough, and that happy, happy look of joy, and love, and peace.

But yet I thirsted, and the mute signs I made were understood. While I yet gazed on my mother's countenance, a gentle hand was placed beneath my head, quietly to raise it—just as my head had been

raised by the hospital nurse ; but I did not think of this then ; and a cup was placed to my lips, but not by my mother. In the fitful changes of a dream my mother was gone, and the kind helper was little Fanny—Fanny, just as I remembered her when, two years or more before, she had pressed her purse upon me, and whispered words of hope and comfort in my ear. And she smiled on me, too, even as my mother had just smiled, while I took a deep draught from the cup she held to my lips. When I looked again she also had vanished, and my dream was broken.

I dreamed again, still the same dream in continuance, but yet another. I was on my feet, weak and struggling ; the road was rough and rugged, and the sky was dark and lowering ; before me was a gloomy forest, and on my right hand rolled a rough and turbid river. I stumbled, and should have fallen ; but a strong arm caught and sustained me. I looked around and could see no man ; but I heard a voice, and I knew it as the voice of my poor old acquaintance and friend in the hospital. I recognised the words too ; they were words which I had heard from the old patient's lips, but they sounded more majestically and sweetly : “‘Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings ? and not one of them is forgotten before God. Fear not therefore ; ye are of more value than many sparrows. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ;—your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you.’”

A strange lightness and joy diffused itself over my

mind at these words, and I listened eagerly for more ; but no more came. Instead of this, the scene rapidly died away, and I awoke.

Reader, you may think as you please about my dream. I will not ask you to believe that it was more than the busy working of my own disturbed mind, falling back and weaving fancies from the memories of the past. But, whatever else it might be, it was a salutary dream to me.

How long I slept, I know not ; I remember only that the dusk of evening had begun to overshadow the Park. Yet I did not stir from my position, but remained thinking, not so much of my dream as of my past life. But either my reflections had caught a pleasant and benign influence from the dream, or sleep had cheered my spirits, and banished for a time the despondency and evil passions which had previously disturbed my mind.

I had other thoughts now, and other than sad and desolate remembrances. I thought of my mother and her love, which shielded my early life from many troubles ; of Peggy Magrath and her disinterested kindness ; of Fanny, and her humble but earnest benevolence towards me, though herself enduring a lot harder than mine, and enduring it with the fortitude of a heroine. I thought too, of what my old fellow patient had said to me about God having taken care of me, and I could not deny that he had spoken the truth ; and I thought of my good-natured, fat, and flourishing friend, the market gardener, who had given me good advice and encouragement, and kindly help

as well. I thought of his story, too—how he had raised himself, from poverty and destitution like mine, to comfort and even riches, by honesty and industry; and at this thought I started to my feet with new resolution and hope. I would not give up—no, I would not. I would go to him the next day, and ask his advice about laying out my little hoard of money to advantage, and—

And then the thought came into my mind that that little hoard ought to be looked after, and that it was time for me to be returning to my old sleeping place in the stable-loft. The next day would be a new day. And with this thought I stepped briskly on, and soon left the Park behind me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNTOWARD EVENT FRUSTRATES MY GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

THE dusk of evening had deepened into darkness in and around the stable-yard before I reached it, and I was very tired. Meeting with no one on the way to dispute my right to be there, I ascended to the loft, and was soon fast asleep in my old lair. I had no dreams this time, or, if I had, they would not be worth telling.

The early morning light awoke me, and I sprang from my bed of soft hay, ready to put into execution the designs I had formed on the previous day; and, as a preliminary to this, it was needful to take

possession of my secret hoard. If I had had any misgivings about the security of the hiding place, they were quickly dispelled: the money was safe; and as I cautiously counted it, and reckoned up how much I possessed, I trembled with excitement. I was no longer poor and destitute; I would not be long friendless and despised. Here was the germ of future wealth and respectability. The seed was small and insignificant; but if others had made shillings by trading with pence, and pounds—hundreds, thousands of pounds—by beginning to trade with shillings, why should not I?

I had counted it, then, and had put it into my bosom—I would not trust it to my pockets—and was about to quit the loft in search of my friend the market gardener—my foot, in fact, was on the top round of the ladder—when a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and a harsh voice shouted in my ear,

“None of them ’ere tricks upon travellers, young fellow; you hand over my money, will you? you’ll find yourself in queer-street else.”

Looking round in dismay, I found myself confronted by a hard-featured man, with a cunning aspect, who, as I discovered too late, had shared in the accommodation of the loft, and who doubtless, while I was counting my treasure, had been stealthily watching me from his concealment in the darkest corner. I may add, that, though the man seemed by his dress—a sort of stable-livery, rather faded and dirty—to be a groom or ostler, and might therefore be a hanger-on at the stables, I was altogether unacquainted with his person.

"Come, look sharp!" said the man. "You won't, eh? then here goes;" and he made a sudden snatch at my concealed treasure. But I was on my guard; and, evading his attempt to rob me, I wrested myself from his grasp, and the next moment was in the stable-yard.

But I was not thus to elude his demand. The man descended from the loft as quickly almost as I had done, and, before I could escape, he had me again in his power. I was no match for my adversary in strength, but I defended my treasure with desperation, and the noise of our scuffle attracted to the door of one of the stables an old ostler, who was already employed in his daily occupations, and by whom, to my great relief, I was immediately recognised.

"Hallo, Roley! be it thou?" shouted he. "Hands off, Tom, will thee!"—this to the man, who had me on the ground, and was roughly searching my person for the little bag of money, which I was still bent on defending—"hands off, I say, or I'll"—and, without finishing his threat, the ostler dragged away the man, whom he called Tom, before he had attained his purpose, and raised me up, panting with my efforts, and flushed with indignation.

"Now, then," demanded the umpire, gravely, "let us know what all this is about. What dost want with the boy, Tom Smithers?"

"I don't want anything with the boy," said the man, sulkily; adding, with a cool audacity which nearly took away the little breath he had left me, through sheer astonishment, "but I mean to have the

money the young rascal has robbed me of, or I will make him swing for it."

"Robbed, eh? Hallo! Roley, take care what thee art about," said my old acquaintance; "thee mustn't be playing these tricks here. How was it, Smithers?"

"Just this here-a-way," said my false accuser. "You know I goes to crib last night rather late, and the first thing I sees by the light of the lantern is this young varmint snuggled up in the hay. 'Ullo!' says I; but he doesn't speak, and, thinks I, 'Poor chap! I reckon he's smuggled himself in here; but I won't disturb him, I won't; but I'll take care of the money, howsomever;' and so I lifts up a boord, and runs my arm along as far as I could get it, and "snug's" the word,' says I. And then I goes off to sleep. Well, I doesn't sleep over sound—better luck for me, you'll say—and—"

"Cut it short, can't thee, Tom Smithers?" said the ostler impatiently. "Can't stand here all day."

"Short, eh?—short and sweet too, if you like. The long and short on it is, that this young rascal seed me put my money under the boord, and up he gits this morning, when he thinks I's asleep, and tries to rob me of my little savings. One, five, four—one pound, five shillings, and fourpence 'tis. I counted it the last thing over-night, and he's got it about him now, the young thief."

If astonishment almost took away my breath before, it now struck me nearly dumb. The cunningly devised tale, so rapidly extemporised, so credible, and yet so false! What could I say in reply, save what I knew would scarcely be believed—that the money was my

own, honestly earned, and painfully and penuriously hoarded?

And then the unprincipled fellow must have caught from my lips the muttered sound of the amount of my little hoard, as I reckoned it up, and had introduced this into his tale as a proof positive of his ownership and my guilt.

It was a bold stroke of wickedness, certainly; for Smithers must have felt it possible that his story would be overturned; but the chances, he might have thought, would be in his favour, and at the worst he might pass off his charge as a joke.

As the reader may conclude, I did not make these reflections at the time. Before I had recovered from my momentary stupefaction, the old ostler's hand was on my arm, and he was rather roughly shaking me.

"What does thee say to this, lad?" he demanded in somewhat of a Yorkshire dialect. "Dost thee know that this is a hanging matter, near upon? Coom, give the mon his pooch, and he'll let thee go. Roley," he added, scratching his head, "I didn't think thee to be a thief."

"I am not a thief," said I, for the first time finding my voice. "The money is all my own."

"Whew!" whistled the old ostler, "that won't go down, Roley. Coom, thee's a handy chap, and all that, and I don't want to see thee at t'cart's tail, and t' beadle behind; but give t' mon his bag o' money' and ha' done wo' it."

It was plain I should get little help or justice from my old acquaintance, who would never be brought to

believe, on my unsupported word, that a ragged young London vagrant like myself could honestly have so much money at command; and, in short, I found myself in a fair (or foul) way of losing my precious hoard at one fell swoop. Only one resource seemed open to me, and I availed myself of it. Taking advantage of my accuser's apparent self-security, and trusting to my own agility, I darted between the two men, and, before they had recovered from the surprise, I had cleared the stable-yard, and was scouring along the street.

Now, no doubt this action of mine was an injudicious one; but perhaps, under somewhat similar circumstances, older and wiser people than I may have committed the same sort of blunder, and so have ripened unjust suspicion into apparent certainty, and given their enemy an advantage over them, even as I did; for rapidly as my flight was executed, I soon found that both the man Smithers and the old ostler were not far behind me in full pursuit.

It was in vain that I attempted to outstrip them. Weakened by my recent accident and subsequent inertness in the hospital, my small modicum of strength was soon spent; my legs trembled beneath me, and my breath became short and laboured. Early morning as it was, too, the streets were not empty; and the cry of "Stop thief!" that was raised, started others in pursuit. Still, urged on by desperation, I continued running, until a foot was thrust out before me, and I fell with violence on to the pavement. In another minute I was in the hands of a watchman, just returning

homeward from ~~his~~ beat, by whom I was conveyed to the nearest watchhouse, where I was searched and the little bag of money was found upon me, as well as Fanny's purse and its hitherto sacred contents. I was, of course, deprived of these ; and my accuser and his witness being ordered to appear at the police-office to support their charge against me, I was locked up to await the portentous examination.

I was not alone in the filthy strong-room in which I found myself. On a broad bench which extended around the blackened walls were several prisoners, some sitting and others stretched at full length, apparently sleeping off the effects of drunkenness. On the ground were others : all were waiting the summons to the magistrate's bar, and all exhibited signs of dissipation and debauchery which if I had not, alas ! been inured to such scenes at Whiskers' Rents and elsewhere, would have given me intense disgust.

"What have you been arter, young fellar?" demanded a man beside whom I seated myself in this place of little ease. I told him my story ; and he burst out into a loud jeering laugh.

"That's a good un, that is," said he ; "you'll get the 'Beak' to swallow that down o'coorse ; and you won't dance in the air one of those fine mornings—oh no !"

"What's the matter?" growled another, raising himself on his elbow, and staring me in the face with drunken gravity.

My first questioner repeated my story with so lively an appreciation of its absurdity, and yet so correctly,

that my ears tingled for very shame. I was spared, however, any additional comments on my story ; for before it was told, my second questioner had sunk back on the bench, and relapsed into the stupor from which he had, for a moment, been roused.

A few hours later, and I was in the presence of the police magistrate, and undergoing his severe scrutiny ; while Tom Smithers, who described himself as a groom then out of place, and who had been permitted by favour of his friend, the ostler, to sleep in the stable loft for a few nights, repeated his story, with unblushing effrontery.

Nothing, apparently, could be clearer and more to the point. There was he—my accuser—a man who, whatever might be his character, had been in respectable service (and, indeed, he now looked respectable, for he had exchanged his dirty garments for others more suitable for the occasion), and was likely to have some remains of his wages to take care of ; and there was I, a ragged, homeless vagrant, who could only reiterate the unlikely tale that, in laying my hand on the concealed treasure, I had only reclaimed my own.

“A pretty story, this !” said the justice, shaking his head ; “but you can scarcely expect it to be believed. Pray what other account can you give of yourself ?”

“Ben knows,” said I, looking imploringly towards the ostler, who had just given evidence against me, rather sorrowfully, I thought, “that I’ve never done any thing bad.”

Thus appealed to, Ben willingly gave the benefit of his testimony, such as it was, that I had always been

looked upon as an honest lad, and that he had never had any reason *till now* to alter his opinion.

"That doesn't go for much," said the magistrate. "Have you anything else to say, prisoner?"

Yes, I had something else to say. The little bag of money lay near me, and that bag—it was made of a peculiar pattern of printed linen, very dirty now, but the pattern was visible—I remembered how I became possessed of that bag.

"If Bill Jackson was here," I said eagerly, "he would tell how he gave me that bag more than a year ago."

"Then why isn't Bill Jackson here?" demanded the justice, angrily. "And who is Bill Jackson?"

I could tell, by the old ostler Ben's countenance, that I had committed a blunder, and I soon discovered that I had irretrievably damaged my case. "Who is Bill Jackson?" repeated the justice, impatiently.

"A helper in the stables," I answered.

"Then why isn't he here, I want to know?" interposed the irritable magistrate. "Send for him."

"Your worship will have to send a long way," said one of the officials of the court, with a broad grin. "Bill Jackson was had up at Newgate and transported, more than two months ago, for felony."

"Oh, ho! a pretty witness you have called, prisoner," said the magistrate. "I reckon that it is fortunate for you that Bill Jackson is not here. Perhaps you have more witnesses to call who will swear to your innocence?"

There was a man in Covent Garden market, I said,

who would speak a good word for me if he were present.

"Well, who is he? and what could he prove?"

"I don't know his name," said I; "but—" It is strange, but true, that often as the friendly market gardener had employed me, I had never asked or heard his name.

"A pretty piece of business this!" said the magistrate. "You are charged with stealing a bag of money, young man, and you tell us that it is your own. You call witnesses to prove it, and one of them is a man without a name, and the other you must have known is a convict."

I did not know it, I replied eagerly. I had been weeks and weeks in the hospital, and only got out yesterday.

"And the first use to which you put your recovered strength, and the return you make for the kindness you received—if this is true—is that you go back at once to your bad courses. Who are your friends, and where do they live, prisoner?" he demanded.

"I have no friends," I said sullenly.

"Where were you brought up then? Where did you live before you took to this vagrant way of life?" he demanded again.

"At Whisker's Rents."

"One of the worst places in London, your worship," promptly rejoined the constable, who had once before spoken. And thus, every word I had uttered in my defence, seemed naturally to tell against me. I do not blame the magistrate; but I have often

thought, since then, how comparatively easy it is for hardened guilt to put on the look of injured innocence; and for innocence, *for a time*, to wear the aspect of guilt.

"I am afraid that you are an expert young rogue," said the justice; "and if you had happened to have been here before, I should send you to Newgate for trial at the next Sessions; and let me tell you, young man, that you have had a narrow escape. As it is, you may think yourself fortunate to be sentenced to three months imprisonment, with hard labour; and if—"

"It was my money!" I shouted.

"Remove the prisoner," said the magistrate; and I was accordingly removed, while my hardly earned and carefully hoarded treasure was handed over to the perjured Mr. Thomas Smithers. But Fanny's purse, which he did not claim, was afterwards restored to me, with its contents undiminished. There was comfort in that.

Meanwhile, I was conducted, in the usual form, to prison.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRISON THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES.—THE FRIEND OF THE FRIENDLESS.

I WAS in prison, and I was innocent — innocent, I mean, of the crime of which I had been convicted.

Was this any comfort to me? I do not think that it was at that time. I am not sure that it was not an aggravation of my sufferings. I was very ignorant, and had but little perception of right and wrong. I had, it is true, a sort of instinctive impression that "honesty is the best policy," and I had acted upon it, though I do not think I had ever heard the proverb. Probably the solitary lesson I had received, years before, in the matter of the stolen apple, had produced a beneficial effect on my mind; and the frequently reiterated declarations of Peggy Magrath, that she had promised my mother to bring me up honestly, had not been without influence, linked as they were in my memory with my poor mother's impassioned entreaties to the same effect, on the last solemn evening of her life; while Peggy's own experience of the penalties of dishonesty had happily given me an impulse in the right direction. But, notwithstanding all this, my mind was in a very misty, confused state in relation to the whole subject; and the trouble into which I found myself so suddenly plunged, thickened the mist, and made confusion more confused.

Honesty wasn't the best policy—so I could not help arguing. The rogue who had possessed himself of my hard earnings and savings, had not only got off undetected, but was walking about unblushingly, and inwardly chuckling over the wicked dexterity by which he had enriched himself and ruined the character and prospects of an unoffending youth; while that youth had been brought down to disgrace and infamy by the very efforts and sacrifices he had made to live

soberly, honestly, and industriously. Such was the view which I then took of the whole transaction.

I have described my feelings when first confined in the watchhouse as those of indifference and carelessness as to the future ; but these gave way, after my conviction and removal to prison, to burning indignation, like that which had possessed me the day before, when I saw the gay, glittering, and smiling crowds of idlers in the Park ; so that when I was subjected to the proper and necessary regulations of the prison, and afterwards set to work, in pursuance of the sentence passed upon me, so much sullenness was manifested in all my actions and demeanour, that I was looked upon by my gaolers as a hardened and vicious youth, from whom no good was to be expected. Then the society into which I was cast was not likely to produce a healthier state of feeling in my heart. The hard labour to which I was condemned was that of picking oakum, in a large room in the prison, where I found myself surrounded by convicts of all ages, from boys of twelve or fourteen, to hoary-headed sinners of threescore years. Not much restraint was, at that time, laid on the verbal communications of prisoners under sentence ; for the " silent system " had not then been introduced ; and the ribaldry and hardened boastings of the most degrading and detestable crimes, together with the awful blasphemies which polluted my ears, filled even my soul, unsusceptible as it was, with something like disgust. But I forbear to draw back the curtain from this part of my history, and pass on to another subject.

My readers will not have forgotten my poor old acquaintance at the hospital, and the words spoken in season which fell from his lips ; and they will naturally have attributed those busy operations of my mind when my bodily senses were buried in sleep, narrated in a previous chapter, as well as the inward conflict between despondency and resolution, to the influence of those communications. I have abundant reason to thank God that, in his providence, he placed that old man in my way ; and I would earnestly entreat every Christian man and woman who has condescended thus far to read my story, to remember and to act upon the Divine command and encouragement : “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

Several days passed away in the monotonous occupation of the prison. I did not mind the work ; but I did very severely feel the confinement and restrictions of my new home. I have called myself—with what propriety my readers must judge—a “City Arab” ; and so far, at least, the designation is correct, that if my hand was not against every man, I was so inured to a free and wandering life that incarceration was intolerably irksome, and I absolutely pined for the liberty of which I had been unjustly deprived. Unjustly ! yes, I felt this ; and—happily, as I have since believed and now believe—this sense of injustice so filled my soul, that I had not the heart to listen to, much less to join in, those “evil communications” to

which I have referred. Sorrowfully and indignantly I sat, hour after hour, without speaking to my fellow convicts; and when at night I was locked up in my solitary cell, I tried to sleep away, through the remaining hours of day, as well as through the short nights, the remembrance of my wrongs.

And it was here, amidst these apparently unfavourable circumstances, that the little seed which had been sown in my heart began to germinate.

"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear Him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."

These sentiments started up in my memory one night as I lay tossing on my mattress, striving in vain to close my eyes in sleep. All around me was dark, hard, and unfeeling. I seemed shut out from the world and the world's sympathy and regard; but the thought arose—perhaps I was not alone; perhaps there was meaning in those words; perhaps it was true, what the old man had told me, that I had a Father and Friend in heaven who cared for me, though none else did; perhaps he would hear me if I spoke to him: it did not seem to me so very unlikely.

And that story about Jesus Christ and his persecutions and sorrows, which I had heard from little Fanny first, and which had been repeated by my hospital acquaintance—and the *reason why* He who was rich became poor—I thought of all this, till, instead of trying to go to sleep, I wished and tried to keep awake.

But would God, the God they had talked about—Fanny and the old man, I mean—would he hear me, really hear me, if I were to speak to him?—I—I?

It was a good many years after this that I first read the "Pilgrim's Progress"; and when I came to the description of Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle, my thoughts fell back to that particular night in the London Bridewell.

"Now a little before it was day," says Bunyan, "good Christian, as one half amazed, brake out into this passionate speech: 'What a fool,' quoth he, 'am I to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle.'"

"'Then,' said Hopeful, 'that's good news, good brother; pluck it out of thy bosom and try.'"

"Then Christian pulled it out of his bosom and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt, as he turned the key, gave back, and the door flew open with ease."

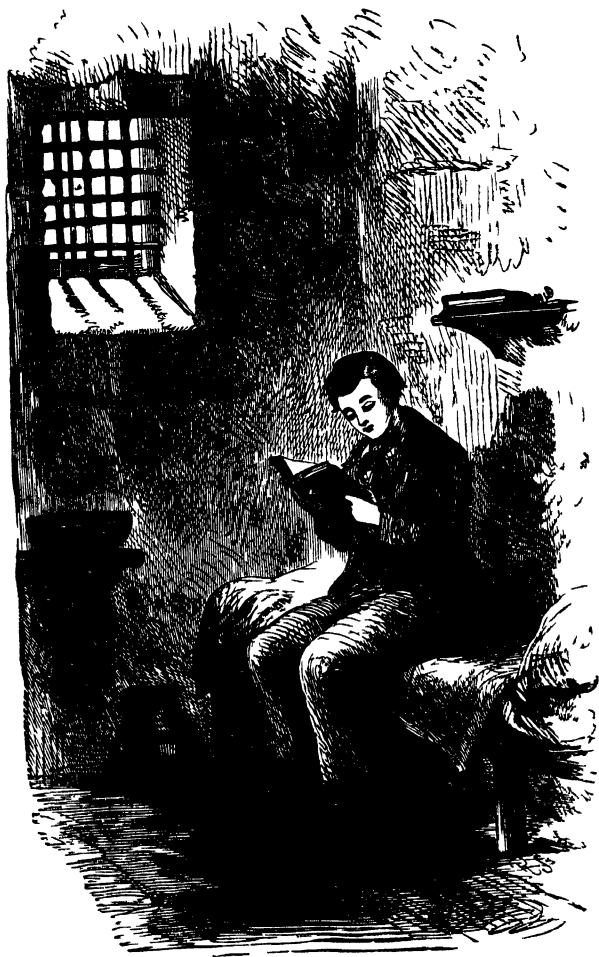
I do not mean to imply that the cases are precisely parallel; for indeed they are, in some particulars, very different; but in the light which broke in upon my dark mind that night, and the ecstasy of soul which I felt when it occurred to me that if I were to speak to Him—this heavenly Father and Friend, of whom I had heard—he, being so good and so powerful, would help me. I was so far like Christian when he remembered the key Promise. But what had I to tell him, this invisible Helper? Well, I could tell him

about my being deserted by my wicked father when I was a baby ; about my poor mother's troubles ; about my grandfather's cruelty ; about poor Peggy's misfortune ; about how I had tried to get a living, and had succeeded till I met with the accident which introduced me to the hospital ; about what the old man had told me there ; about—and I remember that my thoughts were very eloquent about this—how I had got into prison through no fault of my own, and wanted to get out again, and couldn't. Could He help me in this matter ?

I could tell him, too, that I didn't want to be a rogue ; that my mother had begged poor Peggy Magrath to teach me and help me to be honest ; that Peggy had performed her promise (her own "parquises" always excepted—but I said nothing about this) ; that I had tried to be honest ; and, if he could, would he help me ? Would he ?

Reader, I need not tell you that I was very ignorant—very. I had never heard the words, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?" I did not know that I had cast *my* burden upon God—did not know that I had asked good things of him. And when I presently fell asleep, and when I awoke in the morning, I did not know who it was that had "put strength into me." I think I know now ; I am sure I know now.

There was a Bible in my cell—that cell in which I



IN PRISON

was locked up all alone every evening. The cell was not a very cheerful one ; but the days were long, for my readers will remember that it was summer time ; and for two or three hours after the locking up, some portion of light found its way in through the iron-barred window, high up in the stone wall. Well, the Bible had been shown to me by the turnkey on the first day of my imprisonment ; and I was told that I might read it if I liked, but that I was to take care how I used it. I paid no regard to this permission at the time ; but on the evening succeeding that of which I have spoken, I wondered whether I could make out anything that was in the book, and I took it from the shelf.

It was not much that I could read ; but during the short time Fanny had been my teacher, I had advanced a few steps onward ; and her lessons had not been forgotten. In truth, I was surprised by the discovery, not only that I remembered so much, but that I had made sufficient advances to be able to make further progress without human help. I will not prolong this part of my story, however ; I will only say that, evening after evening, I sat with the Bible on my knee, spelling out its words, until the light quite faded away ; and that I woke in the morning with the earliest dawn to renew my studies ; while, as I humbly and gratefully believe, a Divine light beamed in upon my soul.

But, as yet, I was like the blind man in the first moments of his restoration to sight, who could only "see men as trees walking."

CHAPTER XX.

I FALL IN WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND LEARN SOME OF THE CURIOSITIES OF CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE.

I HAVE spoken of men of threescore years as being among my fellow prisoners. There was one in the motley circle whose age must have considerably exceeded this.

I was one day employed at the usual weary prison labour, when this man for the first time attracted my attention, and his looks puzzled me. That I had seen him before I felt almost certain, but for some time I tormented my memory in vain, by conjuring up past scenes in my history. At last, when I had nearly given up the unprofitable investigation, I thought of the old ballad-singer with whom Peggy Magrath had taken secret counsel. Yes, the prisoner was that ballad-singer.

From the moment of that discovery, I had a motive for curiosity: perhaps the old man would tell me of my poor lost protectress; and in the course of the day I edged round to his side, and made myself known to him. To my disappointment, however, he could tell me nothing about Peggy, though he had not forgotten his Whiskers' Rents acquaintance: but there is a freemasonry among rogues—and if I wasn't a rogue, I wore the badge and was in the position of one—so we got into conversation.

What had brought me there, he wished to know.

Oh, it didn't matter, I said; for I shrunk from telling him my story, which I knew from experience would not be believed, and would only excite ridicule. I think, too, that since I had told it in all honesty and sincerity to God, I was less concerned what anybody else thought of me. I did not know then that such words as these were to be found in the Bible, "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold;" but I felt something like this; and was too light-hearted to mind, so much as I had done, what others thought of me, or what man could do unto me.

"As you like, lad," said the old ballad-singer; "I arn't going to pry into your secrets. I reckon you be a young hand. You'll get used to it arter a bit.

"Bless your 'eart," continued he, when I made no reply; "vy, this 'ere baint nothink, this baint. I've bin in a'most every jug in London, and lots on 'em in the country besides; in e'en a'most every county and sheer in England—York, Stafford, Glo'ster, Oxford, Hertford, Surrey, Kent, Sussex"—he ran on glibly, just as I remembered he had done before in conversation with poor Peggy; and he spoke with a chuckle, and a twinkling of his watery eyes, which told nothing of sorrow or repentance for past misdeeds—"Surrey, Kent, Sussex," he went on; "and you wouldn't guess, now, what they put me in the stone jug at P—— for I reckon."

No, I couldn't, I said.

"'Twasn't murder," said he, in a low, mysterious voice; "but 'twas next akin to it. They called it manslaughter, ha! ha!" and the aged sinner burst into a fit of merriment.

I thought it was nothing to laugh at, if he had taken away human life, even accidentally; and I said so.

"Eh!" said the old man, "but you be a green 'un—what signifies? But you be right, though," he added; "and what I says is, whatever you does, dont 'ee go to wi'ence. You'll get in the wrong box if ye do."

"You *are* sorry, then, that you——"

Another explosion of horrible mirth interrupted me. "I never took away no life," said he, when this ceased, "let alone a bit o' poaching o' nights now and then. No, no, I never hurt man, 'ooman, or little 'un; and the big-wigs knowed it all the while, they did."

"How came they, then, to send you to prison for *manslaughter*?" I asked.

"It was their soft 'eartedness," explained the old man; "they didn't want me to swing for an old pair o' leather tights."

"I don't understand you," said I.

"Fact," said he: "there was a pair o' leathers got into my bag somehow, and I was had up afore the justices to give account on 'em. They said as how I tuck 'em out of a shop, and I couldn't persuade 'em 'twas all a mistake; so they brings me in guilty—that's the jury, mind ye: for 'twas a quarter sessions

job. 'Prisoner,' says the "Beak," 'you're convicted; and the sentence of the coort is that you're to be imprisoned——'

"'Beg pardon—can't do that, your worship,' says magistrate's clerk, looking up cunning-like.

"'Can't do it!' says the magistrate; 'what d'ye mean, mister?'

"'Capital' offence—more than five shillings wally sworn to—stealing from a shop—sentence, DEATH,' says the clerk.

"'Eh, indeed! what's to be done? Poor man mustn't hang for a pair of leather smalls.'

"'Must,' says the clerk.

"'Jury must alter the wardict,' says the old justice, looking wery red first, and then wery white.

"'Wery good, yer worship,' says the clerk; and away the jury goes. Presently they comes back, and axes what they're to do. 'Can't you put in a *not* before the guilty?' whispers the magistrate; but it was a sort of pig's whisper, and I hears him. The foreman shakes his head.

"'Clerk, what *is* to be done?' says the magistrate again, in a passion. 'Tis you that has got us in this 'ere mess, and you must get us out on't,' he says. So the clerk looks up again, and whispers and whispers, and the magistrate laughs, and whispers to the foreman, and foreman grins and whispers to the jury; and presently they brings in their wardict agin. Says his worship then: 'Prisoner,' says he, 'the jury has took a marcifful view of your case, and found you guilty of *manslaughter*; and the sentence of the coort is that

you be imprisoned for three months.' And so I was." *

I shall not weary the reader with a detail of the further intercourse I held with this old acquaintance of mine. Happily for me, his conversation did not always, nor indeed often, turn upon roguery. I cannot tell how this was, for I fear the poor old man had been and was a very hardened sinner. Was it that He who once sent his angel to stop the lion's mouths so that they should do his servant no harm, did, out of compassion to my weakness, stop this old sinner's mouth so as to deliver me from further contamination? I have sometimes thought so.

I may even say, that the poor old ballad-singer's communications were, to a certain extent, profitable; for he kept pretty close to me all the rest of his prison time, and gave me so many descriptions—and very faithful ones too, as I afterwards found—of different parts of the country through which he had travelled,

* It is necessary to say that the above ludicrous incident is not a mere fiction of imagination. It was referred to by Sir T. Fowell Buxton, in a speech before the House of Commons, in 1821. And as I have spoken elsewhere of the severity as well as the anomalies of the criminal laws at the time of which I write, I shall offer the following explanation. At that time, crimes which are now punishable by a few weeks' or months' imprisonment, were expiated only by DEATH. For stealing from the person to the value of twelve pence, the sentence of the law was DEATH. For robbing a shop to the extent of five shillings, it was DEATH. For stealing from a dwelling house to the value of forty shillings, was DEATH.

It is no matter of surprise that this undue and unchristian severity constantly defeated itself and perverted the exercise alike of justice and of mercy. Numberless crimes were suffered to go unpunished rather than subject the criminal to the penalty which hung over him; and when prosecutions took place, the crooked ingenuity of prosecutors, witnesses, counsel, judges, and juries, was perpetually exercised in defeating the operation of the law.

that the days seemed shortened and the work lightened. I learned from him, too, what he knew and chose to tell of my mother's home and family: but this was not much; and, in return, I gave him an account of my expedition with Peggy, and the reception we received at my grandfather's hands. I lost my companion, however; for his time expired before mine.

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER ACQUAINTANCE, BY WHOM MY CHARACTER IS
CLEARED.

TEN weeks had passed away, and I was yet in prison; but I had ceased to brood over my wrongs and harbour revenge in my heart. It had been a blessed imprisonment to me; and my solitary cell had been a Bethel.* It was no longer an aggravation of my punishment that I was innocent of the crime laid to my charge; the thought gave me both comfort and hope.

I had yet much to learn, however; I scarcely could have told the cause of this alteration in my feelings; I only knew that, day after day, I hailed the time of my seclusion in the cold cell, that I might talk to my

* "A Bethel." I know very well that this word has been held up to ridicule by some modern writers, and perhaps misapplied by some who are not writers; but I choose to use it here; for surely I can say of that "solitary cell" as Jacob did of his night's resting place, "It was none other than the house of God; it was the gate of heaven."

Father in heaven, and ask his help, and spell out some words of comfort in the Bible. And thus was my burden made light, and my sorrow turned into joy. I did not, at that time, know the *words* of the promise, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"; but I experienced its power, and this was far better.

Ten weeks, then, had passed away, when one morning, among a batch of new arrivals, I observed the very man to whom I owed my unjust punishment—Tom Smithers. In spite of his prison garb, I knew him at once; and he was not long in singling me out from the rest of the oakum pickers. He came up to me, and, with a boisterous laugh and coarse joke, clapped me on the back; but my indignation was roused, and I turned away.

"What! too proud to own an old acquaintance in trouble?" said he; and then in a lower tone he added, "I say, what about the one, five, four? eh, my chick?"

Still I did not answer; and but for Smithers himself, who seemed to think the affair too good a joke to be buried in oblivion, his former treachery might have remained undetected; but before the day was over, it was known among the prisoners.

There is said to be "honour among thieves"; and Tom Smithers soon found that he had been injudiciously free in his communications. In the half-hour allowed for walking in the prison yard before locking up at night, a mock tribunal was formed, and a mock trial performed, in which the confessions or boastings of the man were brought forward against him, and in

which I also was compelled to give evidence. The result was conclusive ; and the culprit was solemnly sentenced to be pumped upon. The joke was too good and practical to be forborne ; so Smithers was dragged to the pump, and had undergone the operation before the turnkeys could interfere to rescue him from the hands of his laughing prosecutors, who, to save themselves from extra labour and closer confinement, pleaded the unfortunate man's own disclosures of his past treachery.

Two days after this, I was conducted to a room in the prison, where, to my surprise, I found myself in the presence of the justice who had sent me to hard labour and confinement, and confronted by my former accuser, who, as it seemed, having a wholesome dread of a repetition of the discipline of the pump, had been induced to repeat his confession to the governor of the prison, by whom it had been conveyed to the justice himself.

I was interrogated, and repeated my story. It was astonishing how much more natural and coherent it seemed, now that it was urged against a man convicted of another crime, than when it was pleaded in my defence against an apparently creditable and respectable accuser.

"How much longer has this young prisoner to stop here?" asked the justice of the head gaoler.

"About three weeks," he was told.

"Um ! well : it isn't worth while to make a to-do about this little mistake for the sake of three weeks—getting out a pardon, and all that sort of thing.

Hark'ye, young man, I dare say you have not been very uncomfortable here, have you?"

"No sir; but——"

"Ah, well then, a week or two won't make any difference," said he, interrupting me. "You can grant him any little indulgences, you know, Mr. R——; and—ah, it will be a good lesson to you, young man, not to get into bad company another time. You seem to be a decent sort of a lad, and with your talents, you know——"

"Shall I get my money again, sir?" I asked, when I found that the gentleman stopped short in his address.

"I should think not," said he, slowly and gravely; "you might sue the fellow, to be sure, but he is not worth powder and shot, I am afraid; and I can assure you that, in such cases, the first loss is the least."

And that was all the reparation I obtained for my false imprisonment. I was not liberated a day sooner,* nor did I receive back a penny of my lost money; neither was my character much mended by the late discovery of my innocence. But I had gained experience, I was told when I left the prison—yes, I had gained experience. Ah! I had gained something more than that; I had gained a Friend; or rather, the

* It is not long ago that I saw, in a police report, an account of a poor female prisoner, who, during her imprisonment was proved innocent of the charge on which she was convicted; but who, as in my case, was told that, as her term had nearly expired, it was scarcely worth while to revoke the sentence. The only difference in her case was, that the remaining term of imprisonment was days—not weeks. Other cases of a similar sort, but of a still more painful character, have more recently been brought before the public.

knowledge of his friendship had been brought home to me. I should leave the prison, I was told, without a stain on my character. This was something; but oh, how much more was it to leave the prison with this assurance, or at least with this hope, that the great God really loved me, and was ever ready to help me. And I had this hope, and blessed God for it.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE OLD ACQUAINTANCES AND A NEW ONE.—I GET A NEW JACKET, AND BECOME AMBITIOUS OF SCHOLARSHIP.

I WAS not absolutely penniless when I found myself outside the prison walls; for, setting aside little Fanny's purse and its contents, which had been restored to me, and which I concealed about me as a relic too sacred to be profaned by common uses, a shilling remained of the parting gift I had received at the hospital three months before. With this solitary shilling I had to begin the world afresh. Well, it did not much matter, I thought; I was young, and active, and free; and with a light heart I took my way once more to the stables—my only home—trusting that if my innocence had not already been made clear there, I could make it so.

I was not disappointed. The old ostler received me kindly, though he made light of the punishment I had endured. "Well!" he cried, giving me a hearty shake of the hand and laughing loudly, "but that was

a shabby trick Tom Smithers played thee ; and it was thy money after all ! I did not think thou had been so rich, lad, and I did not think Tom Smithers was a knave ; but he coom Yorkshire over me too, so we'll say no more about it. There's t'loft, lad, for thee ; and here's a nag wants rubbing down ; and there's twopence for the job."

My next visit was to Covent Garden market ; but there I was disappointed, for the good-natured salesman was not there, and I found that his stand was occupied by another man, who looked far from good-natured, and bade me go about my business when I offered my services. And though, after this, I went on several successive mornings at the earliest dawn, I saw nothing more, at that time, of my old friend. I obtained occasional employment, however, from others.

I returned to my old occupations at Smithfield also, and experienced the rude but substantial sympathy of some who knew me, and had witnessed or heard of my accident so many months before, and who had not expected that I should recover. Altogether, therefore, I soon found myself in a fair way of surmounting my loss ; and I took care not to trust again to any hiding place, in the loft or elsewhere, but carried my accumulating savings in my pocket, which, after all, I fancied might be the safest place for them.

I shall pass quickly over this part of my story. In fact, I have few incidents to narrate regarding the following two years of my life, and only two that were of any consequence as relating to my future history. The first was this :—

One day, in the depth of winter, as I was standing by the sheep-pens in Smithfield, blowing my fingers and stamping on the ground to keep up some circulation in the blood, while the owner or drover of the animals of which I had temporary charge was warming himself in another sort of way in a neighbouring public house, I was clapped on the shoulder, and, looking up, I found myself confronted by my sometimes playfellow but oftener tormentor, Sloppy Stevens, of Whiskers' Rents notoriety. He was rather flashily dressed, and his countenance—though so young—was evidently bloated and disfigured with constant dissipation. He seemed, even then, to be half intoxicated, and the coarse and contemptuous terms in which at first he addressed me, left me but little inclination to resume acquaintance. I replied shortly, therefore, to his greetings; but he did not seem inclined to be thus shaken off.

"And how is old Peggy? poor old Peggy?" he asked derisively; "hope she didn't catch cold in the stone jug, Roley-poley—eh?"

"Oh!" said I, all at once forgetting my repugnance to the speaker, and at the time almost unconscious of his derisive tone, "do you know anything of Peggy Magrath? Has she been to Whiskers' Rents since——"

He interrupted me with a loud laugh, and informed me that he and Whiskers' Rents had dissolved connection long ago. "It got so vulgar," said he, very affectedly, "that I couldn't stand it any longer; so you'll oblige me, Roley-poley, by not naming it."

This was the third time he had called me Roley-

poley ; and though it was the soubriquet by which I was generally known, I was foolishly vexed to hear it from the lips of Sloppy Stevens, uttered in a tone of such pompous superiority, and I replied that he would also "obleege" me if he would remember that my name was not Roley-poley any more than his was young Sloppy. I afterwards remembered that, while I was speaking, a man whom I had not before noticed, but who had stood by, waiting as it seemed till the conference was over, fixed his eyes piercingly upon me, and seemed to listen with a half-smile to my retort. He was apparently of middle age, that is, he might have been on the shady side of forty, and the dark hair which appeared from under his hat was streaked with grey. Perhaps, at one time, he had been handsome, for even then his countenance was expressive, his features regular, and his eyes sharp and penetrating : his voice, too, when he presently spoke, was soft and winning. But over all was a very visible taint of profligacy, which would have marred and destroyed any remaining charm. He was dressed in a rather superior and more gentlemanly style than his younger companion, and seemed to have some sort of control, if not authority, over him. My readers must pardon this slight digression, in which I have not indulged without sufficient reason. I return to my story.

Stevens gravely listened to my request, and made me a low mock bow when I had spoken : "Your most humble servant, Mister Roland Leigh," he began, when he was interrupted by the person at his side.

"What did you call the young man?" he asked

quickly but gently, and with a smile. "Roland—Roland what?"

"Roland Leigh," said Sloppy; "that's his name—at least it was the chap's name when he lived at Whiskers' Rents; but may be he has picked up another by this time."

"No, I haven't," I rejoined bluntly; "I reckon one set o' names is enough for any honest person."

"Certainly it is, my young friend," said Sloppy's companion gravely, and, as I thought, encouragingly; "you are quite right Roland—Roland, what?" he added.

"Roland Leigh," I said.

"To be sure," said he quickly: "I know, I know; you seem a smart lad; it is a pity your father does not put you into a better jacket, though."

"I haven't got a father," said I, turning away.

"Indeed! only a mother, eh?"

"My mother is dead," said I—"has been dead nine or ten years."

"Ah!" said he; "and you—what do you do for a living, then?" he asked, still very kindly, while Sloppy Stevens turned away, kicked his heels on the ground, and whistled.

"Oh, anything," I said; "sometimes I run errands, and sometimes——"

"Indeed! you run errands, do you? Well, you shall go on one for me now, then," said he.

"I should be glad to do so if I could," I replied; "but I have got these sheep to mind."

"Ah, well, you are an honest young fellow, I see," he rejoined; "and it is of no consequence. But, poor

boy," he added compassionately, "a warmer jacket wouldn't do you any harm, and here's something to buy one with;" and he put a crown piece into my hand, and walked on, while I was stammering out my thanks for the unexpected donation.

"I say, Roley," said Sloppy, who lingered behind, "first-rate, and no mistake, isn't he? Come, give us your paw;" and he held out his own—"no malice, you know," added he, patronizingly.

I gave him my hand—not that in which the crown piece still rested, though; and he gave it a hearty squeeze, and then followed his companion.

The crown piece from the stranger, however, compensated for my mortified feelings at being so contemptuously treated by one like Sloppy Stevens, who, not many years before, had been as very a Whiskers' Renter as myself; and I suppose I returned at night to my poor lair in the hayloft with less burden on my mind than the rich grazier, who, as I heard, had that same afternoon had his pocket eased, by some means or other, of a purse containing two or three hundred pounds in notes and gold.

I may add, that the stranger's bounty was applied according to his directions; and the next day I made my appearance in my "places of business" in a warmer jacket than I remembered to have ever before worn.

Are you curious, reader, to know how my recently received and imperfect religious principles fared in my daily intercourse with so much that was vile, sensual, and ungodly, among those with whom I necessarily

associated ? As nearly and as truly as I can, I will tell you. But, first of all, let me inform you what I did ; and this will include the other incident of which I spoke.

When I left the prison, there was one thing I missed sadly, and that was the Bible in the cell. I could no longer beguile the weary hours of inaction by spelling out the contents of a book which I did not possess, but which had obtained an entrance into my affections. For a month or more, then, I almost starved myself—at least, I limited myself to the lowest scale of diet—till I had saved money enough, as I supposed, to purchase a Bible. Those were not the days of cheap Bibles ; but I succeeded in my determination, and had a Bible of my own. It cost me six shillings. I hid it in my loft, for I thought that *that* would be safe there, even if discovered ; and I judged rightly : the Bible was found, or rather, I was found reading it ; and if ridicule and persecution had been effectual, I should have bidden good-by to the Bible then. But I thank God who enabled me to bear the storm, and at last sheltered me from it by the interposition of the old Yorkshire ostler, who held paramount authority in the yard, and declared that I should not be molested.

After a while, I began to lament my deficiency in reading. I could not get on fast enough ; and there was much in the book that I fancied I could understand better if I were a better scholar. In the present day, a lad in London in my situation, and anxious to learn, would have but little difficulty in obtaining his

object. Ragged Schools and Sunday Schools would readily open their doors for him, even if he were not sought out and gently "compelled to go in." But it was not so in the days of which I write. True, there were a few Sunday Schools ; but after the experience I have detailed in connection with one, my readers will not wonder that I had an unfavourable opinion of these which it took many years to correct.

. One day, however, in a wretched neighbourhood, more than a mile from my stable loft, I happened to see a board, with letters on it, suspended in the window of a miserable looking house ; and, after some trouble, I spelt out that an evening school for boys was kept there. Encouraged by the evident poverty of the place, which perhaps might have deterred others, I knocked at the door, and on being admitted, found myself in a small room, which served also as a tailor's shop ; and on the board—judge of my surprise—sat Fanny's father.

"Well, what do you want?" said he, settling his spectacles and looking hard at my face ; "why," he added, in a tone of curious uncertainty—"it isn't——"

"Yes, it's me, sir," said I ; "my name is Roland Leigh ; you used to know me at Whisker's Rents ; but I did not know you and Fanny lived here, sir."

"Fanny doesn't live here," said Mr. Grey (I think I have not before mentioned the tailor's name.) "She's gone away from me more than a year. But I reckon that doesn't matter to you. What did you come for? Do you want me to take your measure for a new suit?"

he asked me, with a good-humoured laugh—for he chanced to be tolerably sober at that time.

"No, sir," said I; "but that board in the window says there's an evening school for boys here."

"Well, there's no harm in that, is there, Roley-poley?" It was very odd, I thought; but everybody that knew me would call me by this name, when Roland Leigh would have been quite as easy; but I did not mind it from Fanny's father. "Suppose there is an evening school for boys here, and suppose I teach the boys that come to read and write—what then?" said he.

"I want to know if I may come," I jerked out with a strong effort.

"If you want to come, you may," said the tailor; "but you must pay for it, you know."

"How much, sir?" said I.

"A penny a night, and find your own books and candle," said he; "and no trust," he added.

I could manage that; and the bargain was soon struck. That same evening I returned, with the Bible, —my only book, in my hand, and was admitted among Mr. Grey's scholars, who were about twelve in number.

They were a set of ragged colts; and if I say that I did not disgrace them, the description of their outward appearance will suffice. Moreover, they were as troublesome to the poor tailor as they were ragged. I believe that many of them attended the evening school as much for the fun of it as for any intention of learning; and, at times, when poor Grey had given way to

his unhappy propensity, he was sufficiently provocative of fun.

I wondered at the time what could have induced him to adopt this method of adding to his income. I soon found, however, that the six or seven shillings a week he earned by his evening scholars was of no small importance to him: that is to say, it enabled him to indulge his habits of drinking to a greater excess, so that, nightly, after his class was dismissed—however sober or otherwise he had been before—he uniformly repaired to a neighbouring tavern, to spend his nightly earnings.

To my surprise, I soon discovered, or thought I discovered, that the poor besotted evening school teacher was a clever and learned man. I may qualify this opinion now, by stating my belief that he was a person of good education and superior abilities, which he was proud of an opportunity of showing. I soon became his favourite scholar, because I was really desirous of learning; and even in spite of my knowledge of his degraded habits, and my remembrance of his cruel treatment of his poor motherless child, I began really to like him.

Soon, under his tuition, I learned to read fluently and to write with tolerable ease. He taught me not only the elements of arithmetic, but even introduced me to the mysteries of algebra and mathematics, which I have reason to believe he had, at some former period of his life, studied successfully. I smile at all this now; but it is with melancholy interest. I cannot forget how much I owe to my poor unhappy

teacher, for laying the foundation which I was afterwards enabled, with comparatively little difficulty, to build upon; and I sigh to think how the indulgence of one besetting sin deadened his energies, wrecked his domestic happiness, blasted his hopes, impoverished his whole life, debilitated his body, beclouded his intellect, and—I fear, I sadly fear—ruined his soul. Poor Grey!

CHAPTER XXIII.

MORE EXPERIENCES.—I FIND MY WAY TO PUBLIC WORSHIP.

AMIDST all that was discouraging and inimical to my moral progress and religious prosperity, I found—what so many have experienced before me—that the eye and the hand of a Divine Guardian were ever upon and around me, watching over my interests and succouring me in my difficulties. This gracious and loving Friend I gradually learned more and more to recognise and confide in. He pitied me in my wretchedness and ignorance, and he did not disdain my first strivings after light and truth and purity. I found, according to the Saviour's words, that if any man will do the will of God, he will soon learn whether the doctrine be of God or no.

Like the merchant on 'Change, or like the tradesman in his shop, or like the clerk in his counting-house, or like the mechanic in his factory or workshop, or at his bench—each subject to his own peculiar temptations

from the ungodly around, but each in his sphere of duty—so was I in mine. Honestly I was endeavouring, and with some success, to earn daily bread, in the only way that seemed open to me ; and, in trusting to a heavenly Friend, Father, and Guide, I had an arm to lean upon every morning, even as they have. And, trusting in him, and leaning on that arm, however defective might be my religious knowledge, I was not mistaken in believing that he would not forsake me. Let me tell you, reader, that those were happy hours with me oftentimes when I lay awake on my bundle of straw, with the Bible beside me, and the starlight or moonlight gleaming in, or the rain dropping around me through the crazy roof of the building.

“The entrance of thy word giveth light ; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” I know how true this is, for I speak from experience. And I speak from observation too. I have never known a man who has studied the Bible earnestly and prayerfully and humbly, who has not, in consequence of this, had a clearer head and a brighter apprehension for everything else worth knowing. I am sure it was thus with me.

But I have not said yet that I had no other religious instruction than that which I obtained from my Bible. Let me now say that I had. It is only that I like to keep to one subject at a time that I have not written of this before. Since my release from prison, until the gift of my new jacket from the stranger, I had had a longing desire to enter once more the walls of a place of public worship, for by this time I had some sort of idea of what churches and chapels were meant for:

there was a chapel and a chaplain at the prison, and this had somewhat enlightened me. While indulging this laudable wish, however, I had a lively remembrance, not only of my first misadventure in a church, but also of the reception I met with when once afterwards I essayed to enter. So I contented myself, Sunday after Sunday, with lingering near one in particular, where the rich swelling tones of a powerful organ could be heard at some distance from the building.

But when I got my new jacket, I bethought me that I had money enough to furnish the remainder of a suit of clothes, which perhaps, especially with a clean face and combed hair, might give me a tacit admission to public worship. A Sunday or two afterwards, therefore, I prepared myself for making the attempt. I shrunk, however, from the church which so enraptured me, for there the congregation seemed too grand and imposing in my eyes; but at some distance from the stables, and in the heart of the city, was a building which I had more than once noticed to be crowded with all sorts of people, and among them a good number of persons belonging to the humbler classes. Among these, I thought I could surely slip in unperceived.

I made the attempt, and succeeded. The officiating minister was a very aged man; but few marks of weakness were apparent in him. His frame was yet robust, and his voice was strong and penetrating; while on his rather hard and weather-beaten countenance rested a smile of evident sympathy and benevolence,

which won my affections ; but these are comparatively small matters.

I cannot describe the feelings with which I heard that first sermon to which I ever listened. To say that I was affected would be doing them less than justice—I was enthralled. I found now, for the first time, that I was not alone in the world ; that there were others who had passed and were passing through the same experiences as mine. It was what I had wanted, but had little hoped to obtain.

From that time I was one of Mr. N——’s most constant hearers ; and it was not long before I heard from his own lips so much of his earlier history—to which he frequently referred in his sermons—as increased my interest in him. His younger life had been one of strange adventures ; and, at one time, he had sunk into an abyss of vice and misery from which it seemed almost impossible for him to be rescued. He had been in perils on land, and perils at sea—had been shipwrecked—had been the sport of malice, and the object of derision, and the recipient of deserved punishment. He had toiled as a slave under the burning sun, without expectation of redemption ; and when at length redeemed, his “excess of riot” had struck even hardened sinners with fear, if not with disgust. Talk of city Arab!—no city Arab could seem more hopeless of reformation than he ; and yet the grace of God in him had

“Changed the raven to a dove,
The lion to a lamb.”

It surely is no wonder that, as from time to time I learned these particulars of the old preacher's life, and heard him tell of the wonderful providences by which he had been led all his life long, I felt encouraged to hope more and more, and that a strange charm should seem to hang upon his lips.

But, useful as the history of this good man's life was to me, of far greater value was the spiritual instruction I derived from his ministry.

Bear in mind, reader, that up to this time my opportunities of obtaining divine knowledge by any outward means had been very limited. I had only within a few weeks possessed a Bible, and commenced its study. I was a slow and imperfect reader, and diligently as I perused that blessed book, I but partially understood what I read ; for, like the Ethiopian eunuch, I had no one to guide me. It is true, I had the remembrance of what I had heard from little Fanny and my old hospital friend, and very precious these memories had become to me : but I could not make of them more than they contained ; and I felt very painfully, that there was more, must be more, to be learned of which I was very ignorant.

I have since then often thought, and I think now, that I was like the disciples of Christ, who, when he was on earth, were only very partially made acquainted with the dignity of his character, the Divinity of his person, and the true importance of his mission. They loved him, indeed, with a sincere affection, and trusted him as worthy of their implicit confidence ; but their highest and best knowledge of him was reserved until

after his resurrection. So also I think I resembled those Ephesian converts, who when asked by the apostle Paul, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

Thus, also, though I had learned to look up to the great God as my Friend and Protector, and had found my way to his mercy-seat (as I humbly hope and believe) as a poor suppliant needing his help, I had but a confused and indistinct perception of the way of approach. I did not know then that the Lord Jesus Christ had said, "I am the way;—no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Still further, though the review of my past life of ignorance and sin gave me pain, and I sincerely desired to shape my future conduct according to the rules which I had found in the Bible, I had very low notions of the holiness of God, and of his Divine law, and an exceedingly imperfect apprehension of the real guilt of any transgression of that law.

I could say much more about my ignorance at that time; but why need I? Were you not ignorant once, my friend and fellow-christian? Not so ignorant as I was; I would not think that of you—but yet ignorant.

From this ignorance I was rescued, step by step. I cannot say by what exact degrees one gleam of light after another entered my mind; but I may thankfully acknowledge that it was to the preaching of the gospel by the lips of Mr. N——, that I was in large measure indebted, under God, for the clearing away of those mists by which I was surrounded.

The process was painful. I well remember the distress of soul which accompanied the discovery of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the strong convictions of my own personal vileness. My heart was overwhelmed within me; I saw myself wretched and helpless. Innumerable evils took hold of me. The comforts I had felt from the thought that God was my Friend and Father all faded away: for how could he, the holy and just, be a Friend to such a miserable sinner as I? Instead of this, I fancied Satan to be at my right hand, exulting in my sad condition, and ready to make me his prey for ever. I was ready to give up all for lost.

Perhaps it was needful that I should feel all this, in order that I might realize, more fully, the infinite value of the sacrifice of Christ, and the true nature of the atonement offered for sin. It was this new discovery that removed the burden which was too heavy for me to bear,—the new knowledge which beamed in upon me, under the faithful preaching of the gospel, that He whom I had learned to admire and love as a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” was also “God over all, blessed for evermore,” and that therefore he was able to save me. It was this new and surprising knowledge which turned my sorrow into joy, even as my previous and imperfect joy had been turned into sorrow. I had been like Hagar in the wilderness. The little water I had in the bottle was spent, and I sat down in despair until my eyes were opened by God’s Holy Spirit, through the ministry of his servant, to see the fountain close by, sufficient to supply me all

my life long. There was no more moaning over my empty bottle then; for I had found all that I wanted in my God and my Lord. I had but to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, as he hung upon the cross; and then to look at him again, as he now reigns in glory, possessed of all power in heaven and on earth, with thousands of thousands of saints and angels worshipping before him:—I had but to compare my sins with his blood shed for sinners, my wants with his fulness, my weakness with his strength, my wretchedness with his everlasting love, and all my fears departed: for I knew then whom I believed. I had not known this before; but now I could say with the apostle, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

With this blessed and precious knowledge—knowledge of the love of Christ, and his almighty, Divine power to save—came a more enlightened perception of the way in which I had been led to it. I could see now how God’s Holy Spirit had influenced my soul, and brought me on step by step in the divine and spiritual life; and I could readily understand how indispensably necessary those influences had been. Need I add, that it gave me unspeakable encouragement to reflect that the great change of which I could but be conscious was not my own work, but His; and that he who had begun it was able to carry it on and complete it?

All this and much more was brought home to my

soul by the preaching of the gospel: so you see, reader, that I was not, at this time, altogether destitute of the means of instruction from the living lips, any more than I was from the written word. And while the preacher sent me, every time I heard him, to search the Scriptures more carefully, and to prize them more dearly than ever, they, in their turn and in like manner, led me to listen with increasing delight and joy to one who had made Jesus Christ and him crucified the theme of every discourse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I INVEST MY FRESH SAVINGS—AND LOSE THEM.

I NEED not disguise from my readers that my evening studies in poor Grey's work-room were not so absorbing that I did not sometimes turn my thoughts to his absent daughter; and on one occasion, not long after our intercourse commenced, I ventured to ask him certain questions about Fanny.

His replies were not very satisfactory; and, indeed, he seemed irritated at the mention of her name. She was an undutiful, unnatural child, he said. She had forsaken him—run away, indeed—when he was in great distress, and had taken up with some of her relations who lived in the country, although she knew that there was a long-standing quarrel between them and himself; and, in short, he did not want to hear her name mentioned again, if it was all the same to me.

I might have replied that it was *not* all the same to me, and that, moreover, I could not credit his version of the story; but as I knew that I had no business to force an unpleasant subject upon him, I held my peace. I did not, however, at that time think the less often of Fanny Grey, and longed to have it in my power to vindicate her character. But gradually her image faded from my mind; and though I still retained the little purse and its precious contents very near my heart, I learned to smile at the romantic boyish fancy which had found such an abiding place for it; but as I had kept it there so long, I would still, I thought, keep it there——

Well, it does not exactly matter what I thought; I soon had other affairs to engross my attention. Meanwhile, in my spare minutes by day, as well as during the two hours of evening pupilage, I was deep in the contemplation of declensions and conjugations, moods and tenses, and other branches of knowledge.

And thus, with my daily occupations, in summer's heat and winter's cold, through rain and sunshine on one hand, my pursuit of knowledge under difficulties on the other, a rough and profane and ignorant, but not altogether unkindly world around me, and a heavenly Father and Friend above all—these two years of my existence passed away. I may have been, at the end of this term, somewhere about sixteen or seventeen years old. I was tall and strong for my age, and having begun to take some pains with my person, both in regard to cleanliness and decent habiliments, I might have passed for something more than a "City

Arab." With increasing strength, too, I was able to earn more money, and my secret capital gradually accumulated on my hands, so that I began to feel some of the inconveniences and anxieties of having more than I knew what to do with; and it may illustrate the kind of companionship into which I was daily cast, when I say that I knew no one with whom I felt that I could safely trust either my secret or my money. Alas! I lived in an atmosphere of suspicion.

At last, what struck me as a happy thought came into my mind. The bookseller of whom I had purchased my Bible and one or two other books needful for my advancing learning—a person who sold Bibles, I fancied, would not wish to cheat—would perhaps take care of my money for me. I made the request, showed him my hoard, and informed him how it had been obtained.

"How much have you?" he asked.

I told him this also, and he counted the money. It was something over five pounds.

"Are you sure that all this was honestly come by?" he asked, fixing his eyes keenly upon me.

"Quite sure," I said, not at all angry with him for asking such a question. I had expected it.

Well, yes then, he would take care of my money if I wished. It would be as safe in his hands as mine, certainly; but he wondered that such a steady, economical young man as he supposed I was, should be satisfied with such a desultory and not very reputable way of living as I have described. What a pity I did not get into some decent, respectable service.

It was strange, or perhaps it was not very strange—it shall be as the reader pleases—that this same thought had crossed my own mind very often of late. I was *not* satisfied with my way of life, and I would have been glad of some friend who would point out to me a better way. Perhaps I had found that friend in this bookseller. I ventured to ask him if he could help me in the way he suggested.

He shrugged his shoulders. It was quite out of his way, he said, and, unless I could bring written testimonials from persons of character and respectability, he was afraid——

Persons of character and respectability! and I a “City Arab,” without even a home! How absurd!

Ah! well, it didn’t signify, I said. I thought perhaps he could have helped me; but if he couldn’t, I was none the worse off, perhaps. So we parted on good terms, and Mr. L—— (the bookseller, I mean) gave me a written acknowledgment for the money I had placed in his hands, and I put it in Fanny’s little purse.

A few weeks after this I passed by the bookseller’s shop, and to my astonishment perceived that its business was closed; while a printed bill in the empty window informed me that Mr. L—— was a bankrupt, and that on a certain day a sale by auction of his stock-in-trade was to take place for the benefit of his creditors. I do not know what benefit the rest of Mr. L——’s creditors ever received from the sale; I only know that none ever accrued to me; and thus, for the second time, I was dragged back to my original poverty.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ADVENTURE.

I HAVE referred to two incidents in this part of my history which exercised an influence over my future life. Perhaps I should more correctly have said three, although the event I am about to describe was properly only a continuation of the first—another link in a chain of circumstances.

One evening I had parted from my poor drunken tutor, and was returning to my stable-loft, when my progress was obstructed by a crowd, which had gathered round a man who was reciting the “true and full particulars” of a dreadful murder recently committed. There is nothing, unhappily, more attractive to a London street audience than what the *patterers* call “a good murder,” especially if accompanied and heightened by a copious sprinkling of terrific horrors; and there is no species of popular literature that commands a quicker and more profitable sale. I was not surprised, therefore, that at every half-dozen sentences, or at shorter intervals, the hawker had to pause while exchanging his broadsheets for the halfpence of his numerous customers; after which transaction he invariably cried out, “Sold agin, and got the money!” before he resumed his harangue.

It was not curiosity to learn about the murder, however, that induced me to pause and listen. In the

cracked tones of the patterer I recognised those of the old man whose acquaintance I had first made at Whiskers' Rents, and which was afterwards revived in the oakum-picking room at the prison. And with these recognitions came thoughts of Peggy Magrath. Perhaps, in his wanderings since we last parted, the old man had come across her track. At any rate I was resolved not to throw away the chance of recovering my poor lost nurse, for whom my heart still beat with strong affection.

It was evening, as I have said, and the street was lighted up in the dim manner in which even the best and busiest London thoroughfares were illuminated in those times; and I felt secure from discovery until I should choose to reveal myself. But in this I was mistaken; for while I stood at the outermost edge of the circle of gaping listeners, a carriage was driven through the street, preceded by links; the crowd separated, and the old man was compelled to step from the crown of the causeway to the curbstone of the pavement, close by where I stood. At the same moment the glare of the links fell full on us both, revealing me to the eyes of the erst ballad-singer.

"Why," exclaimed he in astonishment, "if this bean't the most lucky hit as I has made this many a day. Why, Roley, if I hasn't bin a looking for you, 'igh and low, back'ards and forrards——"

"What do you want with me?" said I, cutting him short.

"There's somebody as you knows," he replied, in a

mysterious whisper, "as wants to clap their eyes on you most precious."

"Ha! Mrs. Magrath? It must be. Where?—where?"

The old man gave me a cunning look of intelligence, and winked his bleared and watery eyes, as he nodded what I took for granted to be an affirmative to my question.

"Where," I repeated, "is she? Poor Peggy, I'll go to her at once."

"Fair and softly," said the old man. "I reckon you will be out of your reckoning if you goes without me; and you see, I've got all these to sell afore I can stir my stumps;" and he held out his sheaf of broad-sheets.

"I'll pay you for them all," I said, impatiently; and I put my day's earnings into his hand, and relieved him of his flimsy wares, which I tossed into the middle of the crowd. "There," I added, "now that is done, and let us lose no more time."

"Well," said he, counting the money I had given him, "if you bean't a plucky young feller!"

"Never mind," I said; "show me where I can find poor Peggy, and I'll make it a good day's work for you;" and, retaining my hold of the old man's arm which I had grasped in my feverish anxiety and impatience, I extricated him from the crowd, who were staring with amazement at my proceedings.

"Don't hurry an old feller so," said he, panting, and, as I remembered afterwards, silently laughing at the same time, while with difficulty he kept up with

me: "I bean't so young as I was once, Roley, and my bellers (bellows) be got shakey."

I felt the force of the poor old man's remonstrance, and slackened my pace, taking care, however, to keep close by his side.

"Where is she?" I once more asked, but could get no other reply than that "every time the ship [sheep] blates [bleats] it loses a nibble;" which I was fain to interpret to mean that my old acquaintance could not walk and talk at the same instant; so we went on in silence.

I thought I was acquainted with most of the by-ways as well as the highways of London; and, indeed, for some time, I was familiar with the streets and lanes through which my guide was conducting me. But after half an hour's devious wanderings, I began to lose my course, and became bewildered in a maze of obscure passages, rendered doubly dark by the increasing gloom of night, and a thick watery mist which mingled with the polluted atmosphere.

"We are close upon the river," I said, stopping short.

"You have found that out, have you?" said the old man; "but what's the odds?" he wanted to know.

"I must know more about it before I go any further," I said: "I don't want any pressgang work."

It was not without reason that I came to a sudden stand, and almost turned and fled, as those who know anything of the infamous practices of crimps and kid-nappers and the brutality of pressgangs, in those and later times, will well understand. My aged guide

understood me also, and again he laughed cunningly. "Onner bright," he said; "you need not be afraid, Roley: hawks doesn't pick out hawks' eyes."

"That may be," I said; "but for all that, I don't go any further with you till I know——"

"You give old Peggy up then?" said he with a sneer.

"No, I will not do that either," I replied, with a sudden accession of resolution. "Lead on, and I will follow."

How long I should have maintained my courage I cannot tell, for the dark, narrow, and filthy passages and courts through which the old man conducted me, and which surpassed even Whiskers' Rents in wretchedness, began once more to awaken my suspicions of intended foul play. We had now arrived at a narrow street abutting upon the river; and just as I had determined once more to question my guide, he exclaimed, "Here we are at last;" and, gliding up a small entry, he tapped gently and in a peculiar manner at a low door, which was not opened to him until an interchange of signals assured those within that the visitor was privileged to enter.

"Keep close to me, Roley," whispered the ballad singer, or whatever else he might be; and I obeyed mechanically. Retreat now, indeed, would have been, if not impossible, more dangerous than advance.

"You are late to-night," said the man who officiated as doorkeeper, in a low tone; and then for the first time perceiving me, he added in a still lower tone, the words of which escaped my ears, what appeared to be

an angry and quick interrogation. The reply, which was given in an equally guarded tone, seemed to be satisfactory; and, on our being admitted, the door was carefully closed and fastened, and we were in darkness.

To my guide, however, this seemed no inconvenience. Grasping me rather tightly by the arm, he proceeded steadily along what was distinctly enough a long, narrow, irregular, and crooked passage, cautioning me of impediments which lay in our unseen course.

"Five steps down, Roley, and a wall right afore us—turn sharp round to the right, lad. Keep close to the wall, this side, Roley, or down you goes, and is bait for eels afore to-morrow morning."

I could easily understand this; for as we cautiously passed what must have been a yawning gulf in the passage, leaving a narrow causeway of about two feet, as near as I could judge, between it and the slimy wall, a strong gust of air ascended, bringing with it a sickening effluvium of sewerage and mud, while the dashing and rolling of water also struck upon my ears from the depths below. We were manifestly passing over a creek of the river, on which the house into which we had been admitted must have been built.

"Up we goes agin, Roley—three steps, and a broken one at the top. Stoop now, stoop; bring yer nose to yer knees a'most, if ye don't want to let daylight into yer brains, Roley; count twelve steps, and up agin."

Silently I followed the directions I received, for I felt that then I was in his hands, and that questioning and remonstrance would be alike in vain. In truth,

after the first surprise was over, I felt less apprehension than might be imagined. Remember that I had not cast off even the slough, much less the experiences of my vagabond life; and though I did not place unlimited reliance on my old guide's assurance that "hawks would not pick out hawks' eyes," I was conscious of not presenting any strong inducement for plunder, especially having so recently lost my two years' savings. The greater probability of danger was that to which I have already referred, namely, of having been inveigled to that lonely and mysterious spot as a preliminary to being sold to kidnappers, or betrayed to a pressgang. But, on reflection, I dismissed this fear, and reverted to the probability that the old man was acting towards me in good faith, and that his sole intention was to bring me and my old nurse together.

I trust my readers will believe that I did not forget at this time that I had a heavenly Protector, who was able to deliver me from snares and dangers, if any were laid for me, and to whom my heart was lifted up for help in this time of need.

At length, after many turnings, we came to a full stop, and sounds of many voices in eager conversation, mingled with laughter, fell upon my ear, at first faintly and afterwards more forcibly, and, as it seemed, from the ground beneath our feet.

"This way," said my guide, once more putting himself in motion; "ten steps down, steepish, Roley: don't fall on yer precious nose."

"Stop," said I, my apprehensions once more getting

uppermost; "I have come with you blindfold long enough, and I will not go a step further till you tell me what you mean, and where you are taking me."

"I reckon," he replied, unmoved, "that you have come a'most too far to cut it short now. Long enough! ay, and too long if you bean't conformable, Roley. As to where I am taking you, wait till you sees them as sent me to look out for you, and they'll tell you fast enough. I thought as how you wanted to see old Peggy," he added, finding that I still held back.

"Very well," I said; "go and fetch Mrs. Magrath here: bring a light, and I shall know then that you mean honestly by me."

"No, no," said he; "that's agin all rules."

"Then I intend to return by the way I came," said I.

"Do you, though?" demanded a strangely familiar voice, close by my ears; and at the same moment I felt a stronger grasp than that of the old man laid on my disengaged arm. "On with him, old Pinetar, and we'll see what he's made of," and at the same moment I felt myself irresistibly impelled down the steep stone steps, the din from below increasing as we descended: then a door was thrown open, and by the light of a blazing fire and some half-dozen guttering candles, stuck into tin sconces on the damp walls, I found myself in the presence of a large party of roysterers seated at a long table spread with provisions, the steam and pleasant odours of which filled the large vaulted chamber into which I was thus unceremoniously introduced.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I FIND MYSELF IN VERY EQUIVOCAL SOCIETY, AND
CANNOT GET OUT OF IT.

It was not difficult for me to understand or conjecture into what kind of company I had been deceitfully drawn. I knew that there were at that time, as there are now, secret places of rendezvous, to which professed mendicants resorted at night, to squander in luxury and sensual excess the ill-gotten gains of their miserable trade. This, my Whiskers' Rents education had taught me. It had taught me more than this. I had, at least, heard of other retreats, more jealously guarded, into which only proficient in crime were admitted; and it needed scarcely more than a glance at the countenances of the crew by whom I was surrounded, to ripen into certainty the suspicion that I had been betrayed by my treacherous old guide, and to raise in my mind a strong desire to escape.

Probably he read this in my countenance, for before I could utter a word of remonstrance, he closed the door by which we had entered; while his accomplice, who still held my arm, whispered in my ear: "There's no use in trying it on, Roley; you can't do it, you see; and you had best hold your tongue till you are spoken to."

I turned to the speaker, and encountered the coarse and repulsive features of Sloppy Stevens.

My readers will remember that nearly two years had elapsed since my last interview with my boyhood's tormentor; and they will believe that his unexpected appearance gave me little relief now. There was, indeed, a gleam of malignant satisfaction on his countenance, which augured ill for my personal safety, though why I had been thus entrapped was not easy to conjecture. Self-possession, however, did not entirely forsake me.

"You told me," I said, addressing the old patterer, "that I should find Mrs. Magrath——"

"Is it poor ould Peggy ye're wishing to converse wid?" interposed Sloppy Stevens, in a mocking, mirthful tone, mimicking the well-remembered dialect of my poor old nurse.

"I told you nothink of the sort, Roley," added the old man. "Didn't I tell you, now, that there was somebody as wanted to see you most precious? and didn't you come along with me, talking as if I meant old Peggy, when I hadn't made mention of her name, Roley?"

This was very true; and probably my own eagerness in jumping at a conclusion had accelerated my doom, whatever that might be.

Until now, my involuntary intrusion had not been observed; and amidst the clamour of voices, and the clatter of eating and drinking utensils and vessels, I might yet have remained unnoticed, but from the desperate effort I made to escape from the hands of my two Whiskers' Rents acquaintance, which drew upon me the sharp scrutinizing glance of a man near the door, who cried out, "A spy! a spy!" and whose

sudden exclamation caused an equally sudden cessation from the business of the table, and an ominous silence, in the midst of which I was hurried to the upper end of the vault, and presented to the president of the feast, in whom I recognised the stranger who, two years before, had commended me for my industry and honesty, and given me five shillings in Smithfield market.

"No spy, no spy!" said he, starting from his seat, and compelling me to sit by his side.

"It is all right if the Captain answers for him," said a voice from the further end of the table; "but, howsoever, it isn't regular——"

"Gentlemen," said my new protector, haughtily, "I am not accustomed——"

"Hear him! hear, hear!" shouted two or three voices, as a loud muttering arose from different parts of the table, in which the words "regular" and "order" were the most prominent.

"Gentlemen," resumed the president, "I am not accustomed—that is, I am not partial to being brought to the bar——"

"Hear! hear!" once more was shouted, amidst much laughter from the company.

"—to the bar," he repeated, "of even your superior and acute judgments. At a fitting time, and in a more regular manner, I shall be happy to introduce to you the young gentleman who honours us this evening with his presence; at this time, I have only to say that I shall presently propose his health, and that we inaugurate his admission into our——"

"Club," suggested one of the company.

I will not prolong this description of a scene which I have sufficient reason to remember. Let me only add that, confounded as I was by the events of that evening, and startled with the evident peril into which I had been drawn, I made a feeble effort to win the ear of the stranger who had vindicated me from the character of a spy, so as to induce him to favour my retreat. But I had scarcely uttered a word before he whispered to me, sternly, to be silent as I valued my safety.

I obeyed, for prudence told me that the advice was not to be despised. I even joined, though sparingly, in the rich and abundant supper that was provided, and drank a small glassful of wine, offered me by the mysterious stranger. Of what followed I have a painful and confused remembrance; for I found afterwards that the wine was drugged. I was conscious, however, that the supper was but the prelude to more serious business; and I heard, though almost without the power of comprehension, the details of recent exploits, and plans laid for future operations. I saw—but I willingly spare my readers the recital of what passed before my disordered senses on that wretched evening.

At length, as I partially remember, the vaulted chamber was gradually deserted by the guests, until only the stranger, Sloppy Stevens, and my treacherous guide remained. I remember, also, making a feeble attempt to reach the door, and feeling myself prostrated, as with a touch. I know that I tried to implore those in whose power I was, to release me; to tell me why

I had been thus introduced into their secret counsels; but I believe that the words were unspoken, for a heavy weight seemed to hang upon my lips, and my tongue refused to obey my will. I think, too, that I furnished matter of mirth to Sloppy Stevens, by the impotency of every effort I made; and that gradually I sunk again into a deadly torpor, from which I was only partially aroused by feeling myself conveyed unresistingly into the cooler air of the passage above.

I remember more distinctly, and at times even now with terror, the fearful sensation which overpowered, for the time, the deathlike effects of the drug I had unconsciously swallowed, when, on reaching the yawning chasm of which I have spoken in the previous chapter, I witnessed, by the dim light carried by my guide, that preparations were made for lowering me into the black and horrible gulf below. I remember that I struggled with the agony of despair and begged for mercy; and that only a mocking laugh was returned. I remember how I gradually descended lower and lower, until I reached—not the dark surface of the water which was rolling sullenly beneath, but the firm substance of a boat; and how, when I again recovered some degree of consciousness, I looked upwards and around, and saw that the stars were shining brightly above me, and that the stranger was rapidly skulling the boat up the river. And then, once more, my wavering senses sank into the oblivion of sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I FIND MYSELF ONCE MORE A PRISONER.

THE small quantity of wine I had taken must indeed have been heavily drugged; for it was late on the following morning before I recovered sufficient consciousness to recall to my mind the events of the preceding night, and to be aware that my head was burning and throbbing with a dull, stupefying pain. I sprang from my resting place with a renewal of the terror I had experienced while apprehending a violent death at the hands of those into whose power I had fallen; but whatever might be their ultimate intentions, there was nothing around me to justify present fears of such a result. The chamber was small, dark, and scantily furnished, but it was tolerably clean, and the bed on which I had unconsciously been put to sleep was soft and pleasant. To me, indeed, who had known but little of sheets and blankets—whose bed room had so long been a stable-loft, and whose best couch and covering had been straw beneath and a horse-rug above—it was luxurious. Assuredly those into whose hands I had been betrayed, whatever might be their secret purposes, would not have taken so much pains for my accommodation if they had any design on my life; or rather, would they not have taken my life when it was so entirely at their disposal, without being at any further trouble?

Moreover, I found on a chair by the bedside some food and a jug of clear water; and, without a thought or fear of danger, I first drank a hearty draught—for my throat was hot and parched with thirst—and then ate, and was thus refreshed. Evidently, then, I need have no dread of immediate deadly violence.

For what, then, was I reserved? I remembered, in a confused sort of way and with many forebodings, the kind of society into which I had a few hours before been entrapped; and the villanous, sinister countenance of Sloppy Stevens presented itself to my mind with no comfortable accompanying sensations. No good could be intended me in anything in which he had any concern, I felt sure of that; and the proceedings I had witnessed and the secrets I had heard, though but imperfectly, in that mysterious vault, convinced me that I was in no safe keeping.

To add to my uneasiness, I discovered that the garments I had worn on the previous day were missing—had probably been taken away, to prevent the possibility of my escape, or, at least, to make escape more impracticable. But this precaution was surely scarcely needed; for on trying to open the chamber door, I found it strongly fastened on the outside. The only window in the room was a small skylight in a sloping roof, high above my reach, through which nothing could be seen but a small square portion of sky, across which clouds occasionally flitted. I listened for sounds of footsteps or voices, but all around was a dead, unbroken silence.

I had no further observations to make, and should

probably have abandoned myself to vague anticipations of coming evil, if I had not remembered that God was above all, and that his ear was open to my cry. I often now think of the flush of joy this thought produced in my mind then, and with what entire and happy confidence I knelt down and cast myself on the protection of my Maker and Saviour. It was while I was thus engaged that I heard the lock of the door turned, and the door itself gently opened. In a moment I was on my feet, and, looking round, I saw that the mysterious stranger who had presided at the midnight carousal and had taken charge of me in the boat, now stood before me.

"So you are awake, I see," he said, in the same soft voice of which I have before spoken. "I hope you have slept well, Roland?"

"I want to know where I am, sir," I said, without replying to his question, "and why I have been brought here. And I want my clothes, too; I hope I am not to be robbed of them, sir, though they are not worth much."

"No, not much," said he; "though I am glad to see you in better trim than when I first saw you in Smithfield. You see I have not forgotten you," he added with a sort of smile, but not a pleasant one, I thought.

"It doesn't matter," I said. "I am much obliged to you for what you gave me then, but I don't want to have any more to do with you; and if you will please to let me go——"

"I do not know what I may please to do yet,"

replied the stranger, coldly ; " and if you do not want to have anything to do with me, I may want to have something to do with you. I should not else have taken the trouble about you that I have done."

I began to exclaim afresh about the deception which had been practised upon me, and the illegal detention to which I was then subjected, when my gaoler, as I may term him, cut short what I was saying.

" You had better keep your temper and be quiet," he said, still in the same gentle and soothing tone, " and you will find that I do not mean any harm to you ; but if you begin to be rebellious, you will find that you have an old hand to deal with. You want to know where you are," he added. " I can tell you that you are where you may shout yourself hoarse, and no one will be the wiser ; and any attempt to escape will only make it the worse for yourself. Why have you been brought here ? I will tell you that, too," he went on. " You have been brought here because I have taken a fancy to have you here. Perhaps you may be useful to me, if I make it worth your while. You are not so well off in the world as not to be glad of an opportunity of rising in it, I suppose ?" he said, with another smile.

He fixed his eyes upon me as he spoke. I have before said that they were sharp and penetrating ; and it seemed as though he would, if possible, have looked into my very soul.

" Who are you ? and what do you want with me ?" I asked, shrinking from his gaze with a feeling of terror, which I strove against in vain.

"We will speak of that another day," he said; "and as you are getting reasonable, you shall find that you have nothing to complain of." And saying this, he left the room, to return almost immediately with a bundle of garments.

"These are not mine," I said, turning them over, and perceiving that they were different in cut and texture from, and very superior to, the rough every-day clothes of which I had been deprived.

"'Exchange is no robbery,'" replied he, laughing; "and you will lose nothing in good looks by being better dressed. You see I deal fairly with you," he added, showing me the contents of my old pockets, and the little bag of money (Fanny's), which till then I had not thought of. And before I had time to reply, he again vanished, closing and locking the door after him, leaving me in a state of perplexity which I need not attempt to describe.

For several days I remained in this state of imprisonment, and saw only my mysterious keeper, who regularly brought me my food, but only smiled when I either implored him to release me, or to tell me why I had been thus kidnapped. He took care to compliment me, however, on the improvement of my appearance (for I had, though reluctantly, dressed myself in the borrowed clothes), and to hint at the great things he intended to do for me.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SLOPPY STEVENS AGAIN MAKES HIS APPEARANCE ; AND
I FIND MYSELF IN THIEVES' CASTLE.

IF I had any doubt as to the nefarious character of the designs of the man who had constituted himself my gaoler, or any hope that his intentions towards me were honest, the doubt and hope alike vanished with the entrance of Sloppy Stevens into my prison room, about a week after my night adventure.

"So here you are, Roley," said he, seating himself on the foot of the bed, and surveying me from head to foot with a critical air. "Well, on my word of honour, the Captain has done the thing tidily, though, and you'll be an honour to his bringing up. I told you you'd be a gentleman one of these days, eh? and, you see, my word is come to pass."

If there had been the slightest shadow of a hope of moving my visitor to compunction—if I had not known by past experience that he and compassion were utter strangers, and that he would have gloated over my sufferings—I could have cast myself at his feet, and besought him to intercede for me; but I felt how unavailing this would be, and I adopted another tone.

"I have been used in a shameful manner," I said, "and you know it; and I don't want to be a gentleman—not the sort of gentleman that you mean, and, another thing, I won't be."

My old persecutor burst into a loud and brutal laugh. "Pretty well for Whiskers' Rents that," said he; "and pray, Mr. Roland Leigh, what sort of a gentleman is it that I do mean?" he asked, when his laugh had subsided.

"Such a one as you are," I said; "and I tell you at once, and you may tell the man that sent you, that I would rather be poor all my life—I would rather sweep the streets, beg, starve, or die, than get rich by being a rogue and a thief. That's what I have been brought here for, I know," I continued; "and you want to make me as bad as you are, but you won't. The man that has got me here may kill me if he likes; but he shan't make me what he is and what you are."

I believe that I spoke this very angrily and in desperation, perhaps unadvisedly also, but, at all events, I said it honestly; and I felt at the time that if my rashness brought upon me instant cruelty, or even death, it would be better than being gradually drawn aside from rectitude. It brought upon me, however, nothing more than a broad stare and a sneering chuckle.

"So you have found out what you are here for, have you?" said Sloppy Stevens, grinning. "Well, so much the better; it will save me the trouble of telling you. And you won't be a prig, eh? Pretty well this! Why, you airy (area) sneak! pretty chick you are to pretend to be honest! Ha, ha! When was you in the 'jug' last? Tell me that, Roly-poley; and who was it saw you there? And old Peggy, too; she never showed you the tricks—oh, no!"

And the effects of that false imprisonment—the

legal accident of which I had been the victim—had followed me till now. But for that I should not have fallen in with the old ballad-singer, and have been reported by him—as it was plain I had been—as fit for further training in crime. These thoughts passed through my mind then, bitterly stirring it up; and afterwards I had fuller confirmation of the influence that the “legal accident” had exercised in these after events. Nevertheless, I did not even then entirely forget how that otherwise disastrous “accident” had been overruled for good to me; and I trusted that the same good hand of my heavenly Father, which had interposed to keep me from evil in my former prison, would not be withdrawn from my protection in this new difficulty. He who had been with me in one trouble, even when I knew him not, surely would not forsake me now.

“Hooked you there, Roley, have I?” said Sloppy, otherwise Solomon, Stevens, with a malicious grin, when he saw, or fancied he saw, that I hesitated to reply to his taunt.

“No, you haven’t,” I said: “I was sent to prison, but it was a mistake; and the magistrate who sent me there found out that I was innocent.”

Another loud and mocking laugh from my visitor followed.

I need not tax my reader’s patience by describing the further particulars of my conference with Solomon Stevens; and I will condense as much as possible the narrative of my imprisonment.

I was in a den of villany. Where it was situated

I cannot tell, except that it was on the banks of the Thames, and that the house itself was ancient, and, as I judged, large and solitary. It seemed, indeed, to be the remains of some former conventual building, and was well calculated for concealment, and, if need were, for resistance. I was not admitted to the secrets of my prison house ; but I had reason to suspect, during the many weeks I remained there in durance, that it had secret and subterraneous passages ; and that, while externally it had the appearance of an innocent relic of antiquity, it was so strengthened and complicated within by bars, bolts, iron-lined shutters, trap-doors, and double doors, that great force would have been required to obtain entrance against the will of the inmates, or, I may almost say, garrison ; while it was so jealously guarded as to be almost beyond risk of surprise. My readers will remember that I am writing of the early part of the present century ; and probably the building I have described has been demolished, and its site now covered with modern streets. At the same time, similar retreats of crime are not, I believe, unknown in the present day to the criminal section of modern City Arabs ; and it may be that the police of London are not entirely ignorant of their existence.

The owner or ostensible head of this establishment was the person whom I have previously described, and whom I heard addressed while there, only by the slang title of the Captain. He kept no female servants, nor were any females, to my knowledge, admitted into the house ; but he had three or four

male attendants, besides one old man who bore the name of "Twopenny," who was alike deaf, sullen, and taciturn, and whose chief duty while I was there, seemed to be that of dogging my footsteps, and pouncing upon me at unexpected times and places, when I had so far obtained my liberty as to be allowed to quit my place of close confinement, and had the freedom given me of certain rooms on the ground floor at the back of the building, from the windows of which nothing could be seen but a high blank wall, and the small yard or garden which this wall inclosed. With regard to the other apartments in the house, my curiosity would have been baffled, even if I had wished more than I did to gratify it; for I was not only given to understand that it would be at my imminent peril if I attempted to enter them, but, to make assurance doubly sure, every door was kept fast locked.

At times, this stronghold of crime seemed to be deserted by all its inmates except my old keeper; but appearances were fallacious, for I accidentally discovered that the Captain was very rarely far distant, and that, in some part or other of the building, some secret business was constantly in progress. I have no doubt now that that business was coining; but I did not know, and could not guess then, how systematically this crime was carried on.

At other times, however, the Captain had several visitors; and with these—though under his sharp and scrutinizing eye—I was compelled to associate. One large room, rather roughly furnished, was

common to all who came, as well as to the regular garrison ; and here all seemed to meet on equal terms of fellowship, in which the host himself had no apparent superiority.

The visitors were a strange and motley crew ; and both the time and method of their appearance and departure were silent, secret, and mysterious. Generally, however, as far as I could judge, it was in the dead of night that they came and went ; and neither the presence nor absence of any of the number occasioned either remark or confusion in the household.

Why should I assume a thin veil of mystery which every one of my readers can so easily penetrate ? I have said that the house was a den of villany. I may add, that it was a regularly organized fastness of crime, and that he whom I have spoken of as the Captain was the head of the confederacy. Here, then, constantly were assembled, or going and coming, as inclination led or occasion required, men who daily and hourly held human laws in contempt, and set them at defiance ; burglars returning with their spoils from distant districts ; forgers, and utterers of forged notes and base coin ; highway robbers ; pirates ; smugglers ; pickpockets, and others who, coming under no particular denomination, were ready for any and every evil work.

I soon discovered, moreover, that the society in this place of infamy differed in some respects from that into which I had first been introduced. That was the entrance hall ; this, the inner temple itself of crime.

There, comparatively little discrimination existed—a life of lawlessness giving a sort of title to admission, subject only to general rules having regard to the immediate security of its members; but here, none but stanch and desperate villains were eligible, and a suspicion of treachery would have been a sentence of death to the traitor. Here, too, lay concealed for weeks, and even months, men on whom large rewards had been set, and for whom the eyes of the police were constantly and greedily on the watch. Men who were supposed to have left the country remained in safe hiding here, till the scent had become cold and pursuit had been given up in despair; while, on the other hand, those whose safety demanded it, or who had incurred the suspicion of the gang, were speedily and secretly dismissed to distant shores from this haunt of wickedness,—its proximity to the river, and the Captain's intimate connection with lawless seamen, furnishing constant means of thus evading justice.

I found, also, that every kind of personal disguise was kept in readiness, in the secret recesses of this "Thieves' Castle." I have seen men who made their stealthy appearance as gentlemen, retreat in the garb of mendicants, and apparent beggars as suddenly and completely transformed into the outward aspect of gentlemen; dark hair and complexion often became, under the skilful hand of the Captain, concealed by the flowing locks of a blonde; and the perpetrator of a recent crime, whose person had been minutely described in handbills and the "Hue and Cry," as

light-haired and fair-faced, has, after a visit to the den I am describing, boldly walked the streets with hair as black as jet, and a complexion swarthy as a Spaniard's.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RECOGNITION—NOT A PLEASANT ONE.

AND here, exposed to fearful temptation—brought into perpetual contact with unblushing crime—"drawn unto death, and ready to be slain," and cut off from every apparent avenue of escape—this, the most dreadful part of my existence, was passed. It argued the most cruel ingenuity as well as pertinacity of purpose in my persecutors, thus to drag me into familiarity with "almost all evil," to keep constantly held out to me the hand of fellowship with guilt, and to hear, in effect and substance, the invitation daily uttered: "Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:" while the alternative was as plainly set before me, that refusal to share in these unlawful deeds would bring on me swift destruction.

I will not say that I had no fear of consequences in maintaining my integrity; that I never wavered in my resolution; that I did not cast about me for the possibility of some compromise by which I might

escape from the toils in which I was entangled ; that my heart and soul never fainted ; that I did not, indeed, become contaminated by seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds and filthy conversation of the wicked. It is true, that all my life long I had been, more or less, exposed to this contamination ; and, perhaps, in some way or other, I had been armed against it by Divine grace ; but now it came in upon me like an overwhelming flood. But though I cannot and will not boast of the resistance I made, I may thankfully remember and record that I did not forget God. I knew that he was "able to keep me from falling," that he knew how to deliver them that put their trust in him, and I was helped to lift up my soul to him. I remembered the story of the three Jewish youths in Babylon, who refused to worship the golden image on the plains of Dura, and their reply to the tyrant's threat of vengeance :—" Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." This incident, I repeat, was brought to my mind in these hours and days of darkness and distress, and I was enabled to take fresh courage from the example of those servants of the Most High, and to resolve rather to die than stain my hands and heart with sin.

But who was this man who was the main instrument in my heavy trial, and why did he take such pains about me, when thousands might have been found

ready moulded to his hand and will? My readers will have anticipated the disclosure, nor was I so dull at that time as not to have early guessed at the only probable solution of this question. Let me, with a hurried and trembling pen, describe the scene in which this fearful suspicion was exchanged for certainty.

"Captain," said a heavy-looking, determined man, whom I had reason to believe was a practised house-breaker, and who had just re-appeared at the "Castle," and who was one of some half-dozen ruffians of various professions then lounging in sottish idleness in the common room—Sloppy Stevens being another of the party—"Captain, there's a bit of business that doesn't ought to be put off any longer: this here raw hand as you would bring into this shop"—and he turned a dark suspicious look towards me, as I was seated at a table with my aching head wearily resting on my hand, and my elbow on the table.

"What about him, Kite?" asked the Captain, quickly.

"That's what I says, and what we all says," responded Kite, roughly—"What about him?"

"And it is what I say again," repeated my gaoler, rather more sharply—"What about him?"

"Why, this here," continued the man—I repeat his words as nearly as I can remember them, omitting the oaths, curses, and slang phrases by which they were accompanied—"Here's where it is, Captain; you brings a yokel into this here crib without saying 'By your leave'; and that's agin rules, you know."

"Well, Kite, and do you suppose I don't know what I am about?" demanded the other. "But that was not the only thing I said, if you will recollect."

"Maybe not; you said as how the young cove was ready-made to order; that you knowed him from a chick; how he would cut up prime and handy for light work; and that he was in for it a'ready, and only wanted a bit of training."

"Well?" repeated the Captain, calmly.

"Not a bit well," said the burglar, boldly and angrily; "and I haven't said my say out, leastwise it isn't mine more than others;" and as he looked round on his companions, several responses met my ears, such as, "That's it, Kite; out with it; we'll back you, old feller."

"Go on," said the Captain, quietly; "I am bound to hear your complaints if you have any to make."

"Well, 't isn't a bit well," continued the spokesman. "Here's this young feller has been a matter of dunno how many weeks, in and out of this here room, and up to every move as has been going on, a turning up his eyes, and as sulky as a bear with a sore head; as if the company wasn't good enough for my gentleman."

"Pooh!" said the Captain, contemptuously; "he takes longer in seasoning—that's all. He will be all the better for it when that is got through."

"It'll never be got through," exclaimed the man passionately. "Old Twopenny says as how you'll never make nothink of him—that it's a regular take-in; and Sloppy—you knows what you said, Sloppy
——"

"Gentlemen," said the Captain, interrupting the speaker, "be good enough to remember that when I was chosen your chief, I insisted on certain privileges which were equally necessary for your safety and mine; and one of these conditions was——"

"We know all about it, Captain," said Sloppy Stevens; "and you need not go to palaver us. All we has to say is, that we don't any of us mean to wake up some fine morning with our grinders drawn, and the darbies on; and so——"

"And so, you think it would be as well to get up a mutiny among yourselves?" said the Captain, fixing his piercing eyes on the malcontents around him. "But come," he added, more persuasively, "you know me of old, Kite."

"That's true enough, Captain; I knows you well enough, and you knows me; and I doesn't want any quarrelling: but howsomever——"

"Well, rest satisfied then that you won't be betrayed——"

"We doesn't mean," said Kite.

"—— Never be betrayed by any friend of mine; and you all know that as well as I do. As to the young colt, I partly agree with you, Kite, that he has had the bit between his teeth long enough; but I know what I am about; and in two hours——"

He stopped short, for I had risen, and was about to speak, when his eyes were fastened on me with a peculiar expression, which—connected as it was with the secret suspicion that had taken possession of my mind—had at other times stricken me speechless with

terror. I have heard that maniacs are awed and subdued by the keeper's or the doctor's eye, more than by the voice of authority; and I can well understand how this can be, though I cannot explain it. I only know that now, as before, my tongue faltered, and, in obedience to my keeper's command, I quitted the room, and sought refuge in my narrow and lofty chamber.

The door had no fastening on the inside; but I exerted my strength, and drew the bedstead against it, and then, in the agony of desperation, threw myself on my knees. I knew that the crisis of my fate had arrived; that now on my immediate decision depended on one hand, probably, my mortal life, and, on the other, my immortal soul. And surely I pleaded with my God then, in the spirit if not in the words of one of old:—"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.—My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Thus did I cry to God for help—help from his holy place—help in that time of extremity and need.

I thrust my hand into my bosom, and pulled out a dirty scrap of printed paper which I kept concealed there. It was the single leaf of a Bible, which one day had come into Thieves' Castle, wrapped round some provisions, and had been thrown down disregarded by him who brought it. Unobserved, I had picked it up,

and rescued it from destruction. It had been to me an incalculably precious waif; I had read every verse and every word, again and again, every day, and many times a day, when I could do so unseen, until I almost knew it all by heart; but now, at this sorrowful time, I cast my eyes over it again, to assure myself that the blessed promises contained in these words were indeed there. And they were these—the words, not of man, but of God himself: let me write down now a few of those gracious words, only a few of them; for who can tell whether some other poor soul, in deep affliction, and when the enemy comes in upon him as a flood, shall not find in them the relief, and consolation, and strength which I then found. These, then, are the words that I read :—

“Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers—Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee.—Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

“But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.

“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives delivered ?

“Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered ; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee.”

This was on one page of the leaf ; I turned it over, and read on again the following passages :—

“Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ? or have I no power to deliver ? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness.

“The Lord God will help me ; therefore shall I not be confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me : who will contend with me ?

“Behold, the Lord God will help me ; who is he that will condemn me ? Lo, they shall all wax old as a garment ; the moth shall eat them up.

“Who is he among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

“Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law : fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up as a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool ; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

“Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return,

and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?"

You may say, reader, that these are detached passages of Scripture (they were all on that precious one leaf, however), and that it was presumption and folly in me to pick them out and appropriate them to myself. It may be so: but sometimes faith may seem like presumption, and the highest wisdom like the lowest folly. Confess, nevertheless, that it was singular that this rich cluster of promises and encouragements should thus have presented themselves to me in my hours of trial; and do not blame me that, exhausted in spirit as I was, and fainting, and ready to die, I seized on them (even though they belonged not to me), and drank of their sweet reviving juices, and fed upon them, and was revived. But surely they *did* belong to me, as they also belong to you, reader, if by God's blessed and Holy Spirit you have been brought into the fear and love of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. For in him and by him all the promises of God are yours.

To return to my story.—I put the paper back in my bosom, and once more cast myself before God. Would



MY MOTHER'S PORTRAIT

he help me now?—help me not to fear them who, when they had killed the body, had nothing more that they could do?

I was still kneeling when the door was pushed, gently at first, and then violently, till the obstacle I had placed against it yielded; and then the Captain entered. He silently shut the door, seated himself, and motioned me to be seated too; and then he spoke sternly, and in a low suppressed tone either of anger or some other passion.

“You wish to know who I am, and what I want with you,” he said. “I will tell you; but, first of all, have you ever seen any one resembling this?” and he drew from his pocket a miniature portrait, which he held with a steady hand before me.

I was but a child when she died; and twelve or more years of tossing to and fro, and battling for a precarious subsistence, had passed over me since then; but I had not forgotten my mother’s pale face and delicate features. And it was a portrait of my mother this man held in his hand; not, however, exactly as I remembered her, but in the flush of girlish beauty, and in gay garments such as I had never seen her wear.

I sprang forward, uttered a cry of mingled rapture and anguish, snatched the picture from his hand, and pressed it to my lips.

“It is enough,” he said coldly, repossessing himself of the likeness, and replacing it in his pocket; “I see you recognise it. And now you know who I am: that woman was my wife.”

For a moment I felt as though stunned, not so much

with the knowledge itself which these words conveyed—for I had suspected this—as with the way in which the disclosure was made. I rallied, however, and—— But why draw back the veil, and tell of the scene which followed? I will not do it; for he of whom I am now writing was my father. It is enough that I was strengthened to spurn the temptations set before me, and to brave the threats; that I refused to submit to his authority, when he would have compelled me to an unholy compact with banded thieves, to break the laws of God and man; and that, at last, when he was wearied out with my reproaches and prayers, and enraged by my resistance, a fierce blow from his hand stretched me, for a time, senseless on the floor of my prison chamber.

CHAPTER XXX.

I TAKE LEAVE OF THIEVES' CASTLE.

ON recovering from the first effects of the blow I had received, I found that daylight was fading away, and I was shivering with cold as well as smarting with pain. But my bodily sufferings were light compared with the agony of mind I endured when I remembered the scene through which I had recently passed, and thought of what I had yet to expect. I was in the clutches of a lawless and cruel gang, and, having refused to become one of them, I could hope for no mercy at their hands; their own safety would seem to demand my instant

destruction; and if some spark of natural affection should remain in the breast of him who had revealed himself to me as my father, it was certain that even he had not the power to save me.

I could now understand how it was I had fallen into his hands; for, in his anger at my perverseness, as he termed my refusal to join his band, he had partly explained it. It is unnecessary to say that he had long since found it desirable to abandon the name under which he married my mother; and when he accidentally met with me in Smithfield, and became secretly convinced of my relationship to him, he had no intention of following up the discovery. Indeed, I cannot but think that a temporary feeling of compassion impelled him not only to make me a present of a warm jacket, but to leave me as he found me, in happy poverty and ignorance of crime. When, however, two years afterwards, the old ballad-singer, who had known him as Captain Leigh, and was, as my readers will not fail to recollect, acquainted with my history, encountered him at the place I have elsewhere described, and revealed to him that he had seen me in prison as a juvenile offender, any sentiments of pity or remorse which he might otherwise have entertained vanished, and he gave the old sinner such instructions, and held out to him such promises of reward, as soon led to my entrapment. Let this explanation suffice.

Hours passed away, and all was silent around me. I had earnestly and solemnly committed myself to God—perhaps almost for the last time in my mortal existence; for I felt how possible it was I should not

live to see the light of another day. I had crept into bed, and counted the minutes as they passed rapidly away; by degrees, too, the agitation of mind I first endured had subsided, and a calm, I think almost heavenly, had spread over my soul; for I felt how much better it was to trust in God than to put confidence in man, and that if he were on my side, I need not fear what man could do unto me. And then, again, I thought of the words I had first heard from little Fanny's lips, and afterwards from the old man in the hospital, and which I had since found for myself in the Bible in my old stable loft: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." And murmuring these words to myself, I presently sank into a fitful slumber.

The sound of voices and footsteps woke me; and, opening my eyes, I saw three or four men in the room, one with a lamp in his hand, and another with a coil of cord. At first it all seemed to me like the frightful phantasy of a dream; but I was soon more thoroughly roused by the harsh voice of the burglar Kite, and by his rough hand laid on me.

"Now, then, youngster, up with you, and be quick about it, and no obstinacy," said he, dragging me from the bed.

I tried to escape from his grasp; but he held me too tightly. "You will, will you?" said he savagely, when I renewed my efforts; and he struck me a violent

blow, which bathed my face in blood. "I'll give you a settler, I will, if you don't be quiet," he continued.

"Don't kill the chap outright," interposed the man who held the light; and the words of compassion, feeble as they were, gave me a momentary gleam of hope; but this was soon quenched in the look of malignant gratification which darkened the countenance of my old Whiskers' Rents tormentor, Sloppy Stevens—for it was he whose hands held the rope, and who burst out into a brutal laugh when he saw my agony. "Come, stir up, stir up, Roley-poley," he said mockingly, "and no what-you-may-call-'ums, you know. You are too vartuous to live any longer, too good for this wicked world, arn't you? and so look here, Roley!" and he held the rope dangling in my eyes.

All this time I was fast held by the man Kite, who seemed impatient at the slight delay, for he bade his companions cut short their nonsense, as he was not going to be all night about the job. Hitherto I had not spoken; but now despair gave me both strength and voice. I suddenly wrested myself from Kite's hands, and asked hurriedly and tremblingly what they were going to do with me.

"You'll know that soon enough," shouted the ruffian, once more lifting his hand to strike; but I evaded the blow.

"You are not a-going to be killed," said the man who held the light, and who once more interposed to prevent the further violence of his comrade; "so just do what you are told, and be quick about it."

"And put on these things," added the fourth man,

a dark looking seaman, who had not yet spoken ; and he threw towards me a coarse blue checked shirt, a pair of sailor's trowsers, and a sailor's jacket—both garments very old and dirty. "You have been a gentleman long enough, d'ye see," he added ; "and now you'll try how you like a sea-wy'ge (voyage); so look bright."

This intimation—rough as were the words—once more gave me reason to think that my life would be spared, and still more plainly showed me that neither prayers nor resistance would avail me anything. Tremblingly, therefore, but rapidly, I threw off my "gentlemen's" clothes, in which I had lain down, and put on the sailor's garb. It is curious enough that, even in this hour of dread, I mechanically secured Fanny's little bag, and replaced it round my neck by a string, when I had put on the shirt; and the movement was unnoticed.

Expeditious in shifting my attire as I was, however, the ruffian Kite did not cease his threats ; and I had no sooner put on the jacket than he threw himself upon me, tightly bandaged my eyes with a handkerchief, and gagged my mouth. In another moment I found myself pinioned with the cord, and shortly was being dragged with no gentle force down the steep stairs and through the long passages of the iniquitous old building. A few minutes more, and I was conscious of being in the open air ; then I heard the splashing of water, then the dash of oars ; and then I was lifted into a boat, heard the order given to shove off, and knew by the thumping of the oars in the row-

locks, and the rippling of the water, that I was being rapidly borne away from Thieves' Castle.

I remember little else that passed until I felt the boat grating against some solid substance, and knew that the motion had ceased. Then came to my ear the sound of rough voices speaking low and cautiously, and I was lifted to my feet; a rope was next fastened round my body, and I was dangling in the air, while the "heave-yeo" of men above me, and the rattling of cordage and blocks high overhead, told me that I was ascending the side of a vessel. I could understand now what the sailor meant when he told me I was going on a "sea-wy'ge," and I determined to be passive in the hands of my persecutors. Passive, indeed, I was just then compelled to be; for bound, blindfolded, and gagged as I was, with my head dizzy and senses reeling from the usage I had already received, all power of resistance was taken away. I was hauled to the deck of the vessel with no little violence; and before I had recovered from the shock, I was conveyed below, when the handkerchief was removed from my eyes, the gag from my mouth, and the cord from my arms.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SEA CAPTAIN.

By the dim light of a solitary lantern I perceived that I was in the hold of a vessel, apparently of some considerable burden; but I had neither opportunity nor

inclination to make very close or critical observations, I remember only that the foul stench arising from bilge-water, confined air, accumulated filth, and probably the cargo also, almost overpowered me, and caused me to gasp with a sense of suffocation; and that the space was so confined that there was not room for standing upright.

Stooping over me were the burglar Kite and the dark-visaged sailor.

"Now, look here!" said the former, shaking his fist at me savagely, and holding it close to my temple; "if I'd had my will on ye to-night, 'tis precious little of this trouble you'd have guv us, and so I tell ye; and you may thank the Captin'g that you's alive and kicken now. D'ye hear?"

I did hear; and my heart throbbed with gratitude to God, who had put it into the heart of my unhappy father to show this mercy to me, and had saved him from the guilt of further crime—and such crime!

"And there's another thing I've got say," continued Kite; "you'll never be nearer death than you've bin to-night. But you've got off this time; and now what I say is this here: if you make a try to get away afore this here bark leaves the river, you'll taste powder as sure as you're alive now. And another thing, you're going off in this here craft on a wy'ge; and if you ever shows your face agin in this country—town *or* country—and I knows it, you're a dead man. So now, then, Ned, out with the light."

Accordingly, the candle was blown out, and I was left in solitude and darkness.

My first thoughts were those of thankfulness to God for the deliverance he had wrought for me, in restraining the malice, and wickedness, and wrath of these ungodly men. My next were directed to the future. But dizzy with excitement of mind, and the blows I had received, now that immediate danger seemed past, all power of thought suddenly left me: I sunk back against the hard and rough side of the vessel, and I believe that I fainted.

For several days I remained in my new place of imprisonment, and saw no one but the dark complexioned sailor, who at long intervals brought me food; neither did I hear anything except the occasional trampling of feet on deck, and the surging of the river against the sides of the vessel; while, half poisoned with the polluted atmosphere of the hold, I felt a deadly sickness creep over me.

This state of miserable suspense, however, was to have an end. Ere long the increased bustle on deck, and other symptoms of activity, made it evident that the vessel was getting under sail; and then her anchor was weighed, and, sluggishly at first, she quitted her moorings. A few hours afterwards I was released from my confinement, and was ordered to follow my conductor, the sailor whom I had heard addressed by the name of Ned, into the captain's cabin.

It was a dark, small place, fitted up ship-fashion, with sleeping berth and lockers; a small fire in an iron stove was dimly burning; and before it, with his legs extended, and his feet resting one on each cheek

of the stove, seated on a chair the hind legs of which only rested on the floor, sat, or rather balanced himself, a tall, gaunt, hard-featured man, with grizzled hair and a deeply scarred countenance. He was dressed in a seaman's rough coat, and was smoking a large pipe, the fumes from which filled the entire cabin with a suffocating odour and an all but impenetrable mist. I must add, that a tin pot, like a shaving pot, was steaming on the fire, and a stone bottle stood on a little table at his elbow, flanked by a drinking glass and a sugar basin. Further description is unnecessary, except that the entire man—voice, face, manner, and language—was singularly forbidding.

"So, Ned," said he, after a moment's pause, in which he had stared me full in the face, with a look in which cunning and low brutality seemed combined—"so, this is the young scoundrel, eh? a mutinous dog, I can see. Leave him here; I'll talk to him presently." And, in obedience to his superior, Ned left me with the captain, as I suppose the master was by courtesy called.

For several minutes he went on smoking and drinking, without further noticing me: at last he turned fiercely upon me, and addressed me thus:—

"Now, then, young shaver, I guess you don't know who I am."

"The captain of the ship, sir, arn't you?" I stammered.

"Captain! ay, and a trifle more than captain," said he. "I am *master* here, and a regular driver, and no mistake; so I give you notice. If you don't

keep a good look-out for'ard I'm down upon you mind, with such a tremendous smash, as a streak of lightning will be a babby to it:" and saying this, he took another long, deep draught of the glass of liquor.

"And now," continued he, "do you know who *you* are?" and he glared fiercely at me.

"Yes, sir," I began; but was stopped by a volley of abusive language.

"You do, eh? you —— (I leave out his wicked expletives): no, you don't; but I'll tell you who you are. You are a young runaway thief of an apprentice; you have broke your poor mother's heart, you have, by your rioting along with all the riff-raff of Lunnnon—and she a poor widdy! And you'd have been had up before his royal highness the Lord Mayor, you would, and been sent to the gallows, if your good uncle hadn't had marcy on you, and paid to have you sent to sea; d'ye hear?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "but if anybody has ever said anything like that of me——"

"If!" thundered the captain, in a real or pretended passion: "If!"—— and he started to his feet, and laid his hand on a rope.

"I beg your pardon, sir," I said, shrinking back; "pray don't strike me, sir. I did not mean to doubt your word, indeed; but they that told you——"

"Yes, yes, I know all about it," he went on, still in the same passionate tone; but he did not strike me: "I understand you; I have heard all about it.

You'll go saying next that you have been kidnapped, and all that sort of thing ; but I've sent for you to give you warning, in a friendly sort of way, mind, that if you come any of that nonsense now you're aboard, and spin any of your yarns in the fokesell (fore-castle) or any where else, it'll be the worst thing for your skin and bones as ever *you* did ; and so I tell you."

I made no reply to this extraordinary speech, for it was evident that the captain of the vessel was acting in concert with my late adversaries in Thieves' Castle, and that any remonstrance would bring upon me only ill usage. In short, I perceived that I was in the power of a man who would not scruple to use it tyrannically, and that my only present resources were patience and God's good providence. I ventured, however, to ask, "Where are you going to take me, sir ; and what are you going to do with me ?" He answered more temperately than I might have expected.

"Well, there's no harm in your asking that, I guess," said he ; "you are going where this craft is going, I reckon ; and that's to old Warginny (Virginia, I presume he meant), where all men are free and equal, young'un. And this here craft is old 'General Washington,' she is ; and I'm her skipper, *I* am ; and all you've got to do, youngster, is to obey orders, and do your dooty like a man, and then you'll fare well enough ; but if you don't, you'll fare hard enough, I can tell you. If we pull together, you'll find me a clever fellow ; if we don't, you'll find me —— never

you mind what, you'll find out soon enough. So you may tumble upon deck, you may." *

I was not long in availing myself of this permission, and felt glad to escape. On deck I encountered the dark-visaged seaman, with the other portion of the crew, consisting of some half dozen hands. A more unpromising set of men—setting aside those I had met in Thieves' Castle—I think I have never seen, than these sailors ; but I will not attempt to describe them, except by saying, in general terms, that they were extremely filthy, and that sullen, gloomy, brooding discontent was visible on every countenance.

The appearance of everything, both on and from the deck, was dreary and wretched enough. It was piercingly cold, and a drizzling mist of mingled rain and sleet was falling. The deck was dirty and slushy, and the wind, rising and falling in fits and starts, moaned mournfully in the rigging. A few sails were set, and the men were handling the ropes ; but they evidently were not working "with a will." In fact, the only pleasant looking countenance I saw was that of the pilot, under whose charge the vessel was slowly beating down the river ; and he looked as though he would be glad when he had done with so uncomfortable a crew.

The whole scene indeed was dispiriting. On one side, the banks of the river were hidden from sight by

* I have given the above as a feeble sample of the character and conduct of this sea captain—one of a class not yet extinct. Any of my readers who have seen a book called "Two Years before the Mast," will perhaps remember a very similar speech made by a skipper of later days, and therein reported.

the thick mist; and on the other were the low, flat Essex marshes, which, even under the most favourable circumstances, are gloomy enough, and at this time they were worse than gloomy. The river itself also was not only rough, but dark and muddy. If I had taken this "wy'ge" with my own free will I should have felt my heart heavy; and it will not be wondered that, under the actual circumstances of the case, I was not only heart-laden, but heart-sick.

But not much time was given me for brooding over my private griefs and wrong. I had not been many minutes on deck when the sailor whom I had heard called Ned came up to me, called me a skulking, lazy lubber, struck me across the shoulders with a rope's end, and ordered me to get to work. This was my first experience of the hardships of a sailor's life.

The miserable day passed away heavily; but night came at last, and I was permitted to go below—not to my former place of confinement, but to the steerage, with the rest of the crew. I believe that the wind had chopped round, and was dead against us, so the anchor had to be cast, and all but one of the crew were below; and surely a more wretched night I had never experienced than the first night in a steerage berth. At Whiskers' Rents, in my stable loft, in my prison cell, at Thieves' Castle, and even in the filthy hold of the vessel—in all these places, I had had at least the negative blessing of being shut out at night from evil companionships; but now I was exposed to a full and unrestrained stream of blasphemy, impiety, and pollution. I strove in vain to sleep. But, not to

dwell on this new and fearful trial, let me hurry on.

The next day, and the following one, we were still beating down the river against a contrary wind; but on the third evening a more favourable breeze sprang up, and all sails were set. In the morning the wind again changed; but we were out at sea, and I found that the pilot had left us.

Until then, the skipper had not more than once or twice left his own cabin; now, however, he made his appearance on deck, and took the command of the vessel. He was evidently intoxicated, and in an ill humour because of the shifting of the wind.

“We shall have a hot time of it now,” muttered one of the sailors, when the captain, in language which I shall no further describe than that almost every other word was an oath, gave contradictory orders, and then stormed that he was not obeyed.

I shall give no further account of that wretched day, exhibiting, as it did most appallingly, the misery that flows from unbridled passions. I could not help, however, wondering at that time, both how men could be induced to sail under the orders of a brutal desperado like this captain, and why they did not combine to resist such flagitious abuse of almost irresponsible power. I did not know, at that time, the fearful penalties they would have incurred by resistance. Probably, also, if resistance had been offered, as many of the crew would have sided with the tyrant as with the victim. My first wonder would perhaps have been solved, if I had known all the circumstances

relating to the connection between the captain and his crew.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A STORM.—THE GOODWIN SANDS.—A SHIPWRECK.

“ALL HANDS ON DECK !”

I was roused from a troubled slumber by this order, shouted down the hatchway by one of the watch ; and on obeying, a new experience opened upon me. The wind had risen to a storm, and was whistling through the rigging, and beating the sails against the masts with frightful concussions ; the vessel was rolling and pitching, so that it was impossible, for a novice like myself at least, to keep his legs ; and it was strange that I was not at once swept overboard, for heavy waves were dashing furiously across the deck. The night was not very dark ; but a blinding heavy storm of snow was falling, so that not only the sea and sky, but almost every part of the vessel was hidden from sight. The snow froze, too, as it fell, and every rope seemed to be cased in a coating of rough ice.

It did not take long to discover all this ; but I was not to be a mere spectator of the storm, if that term may be allowed, where literally scarcely anything could be seen. I was holding on to a rope, when the sailor Ned stumbled against me ; and the next moment, with a volley of abuse, I was ordered aloft, to assist in reefing sail.

I had scarcely scrambled up the ratlines, when a sudden cry of "breakers" reached me. I did not know what was meant, but the men who were already laying out on the mainsail yard well enough understood the alarm; and it was echoed back by their lips in tones of terror which I have never forgotten. By this time, either the snow storm had partially lulled, or my eyes had become more accustomed to the misty light, so that, casting my eyes in the direction the vessel was taking, I fancied I perceived, within pistol shot of its bow, a long broad line of foam; and I was not deceived in thinking that I heard, above the turmoil of the wind, a sound like that of waves furiously dashing on shore.

"We are on the Good'ens," shouted one of the men near me, sliding down as he spoke by a rope to the deck, and followed by another and another, who thus left the sail to its fate. I followed them more slowly, not the less alarmed, perhaps, that I was unconscious of the cause of *their* alarm, and was not fully aware of the precise danger close at hand.

On deck, all was confusion and dismay. The men were hurrying to and fro, slipping, falling, scrambling again to their feet, clinging again to ropes, and filling the air with shouts of desperation, awful curses, and frantic prayers. The captain, more than any of the rest, seemed to have lost all presence of mind. Fright had driven away intoxication; and amidst the terrible din, I could hear him offering the most extravagant rewards to his men if they would save the ship and his life. Alas! no human power was available for this now.

One only of the seamen seemed to retain any degree of self-possession: this was Ned, who sprang to the helm, which had been abandoned, calling on the others for assistance; but none, except myself, heeded him. Our united efforts were futile. Perhaps if the danger had been earlier perceived, it might have been avoided; but I am not sailor enough to judge: as it was, we might as well have attempted to lift a mountain as to turn the vessel from its destructive course. On, on it bounded; then came a crash which seemed to shake and loosen every timber, and a shock which cast us with violence to the deck; and when I rose half stunned to my feet, the work of destruction had already commenced.

Yet in this moment of awful dread, and when eternity seemed to be already opening to all on board, there was space and time left to the most thoughtless for consideration and prayer. I had left the helm, and with Ned—for even his protection, or rather his presence, at that time seemed to give me some slight encouragement; (he, as I have said, was the only one who had not given way to despair)—with Ned, then, I had rushed forward and was clinging to the foremast, when the captain staggered towards us. By this time the snow had abated, and objects were so far visible, that I could see that his (the captain's) countenance was ghastly pale.

“Ned, Ned!” he cried, despairingly, when he had recognised his only associate, and I fear his accomplice in many hidden crimes—“Ned, I can’t die yet! I arn’t fit to die, you know *I* arn’t.”

"I reckon not, Captain," said Ned, hoarsely. "If you are, 'tis more than the rest of us is; and you must have had a mighty sudden change."

"I tell you I arn't, Ned," groaned the captain; "I haven't repented. I always said I'd repent, I did; and I haven't got time now; you know I haven't, Ned."

"You've got as much time as the rest of us," replied the sailor, in a tone almost of contempt, as it seemed to me.

"I tell ye, I can't do it all in a minute, I can't; there's more to repent of than you know about. It isn't fair, it isn't, to cut me off like this!"—and then the unhappy wretch broke out into a strain of expression which curdled me with horror, and which I may not repeat. "My father was a good man, *he* was," he continued, clinging with desperation to a rope, and swaying to and fro with every roll of the fated vessel: "yes, he *was* a good man, and he used to tell me I must pray, he did, and—and——"

"Why don't you pray, then, Captain?" demanded the other, with evident impatience.

"I can't; I raaly can't, Ned; the words won't come, they won't; I can't think of none on 'em;—and I arn't fit to die, I arn't."

"Please, Captain," I said, getting as close to him as I could, "say, 'Lord, save me, or I perish;' and if you say it with all your heart, the Lord Jesus Christ will hear you."

"Ha! what's that?" shouted the unhappy man; "I've heard those words before somewhere, I have."

Did you hear 'em, Ned? But I can't say it; I tell you I haven't repented, I haven't; and tisn't of no use. Jesus Christ won't hear me; he won't save me; he knows I am'n't fit to die; and it's a——it isn't right and fair, it isn't, not to give me more time to repent: he can't do anything for me now, *he* can't." And he threw himself on the deck in abject helplessness.

"Oh yes, Captain, he can indeed," I ventured to say; and for the moment I think I was unconscious of my own natural dread of death, and of the certain destruction which seemed to await me; "'Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost.' The Bible says so."

"I haven't got a Bible," he shrieked; "I haven't seen a Bible for years and years; and 'tis no use telling me. I *must* live a little longer; I can't die yet, I can't." And he staggered once more to his feet.

Long as it takes to write this, it occupied but a very few minutes in reality; and it was amidst the beating and surging of the furious waves, and the groaning and creaking of the parting timbers, that sentence after sentence was uttered. But even while the despairing sinner was saying that he must live a little longer, that he couldn't die yet, that he wouldn't, his doom was on him. A large wave dashed upon the part of the deck where he stood, and swept him away. For a moment his figure was seen in the water in a despairing attitude. Then came a mountain wave sweeping all before it, and another, and another; and when these had passed away, he had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MY LIFE IS SAVED BY AN ENEMY.

"HIGHER up, higher; 'tis the only chance we've got; give me your hand, my man: there, that's hearty."

We were in the rigging—Ned and I; for, horror-struck with the scene I have just described, as well as driven to seek a respite, if even of only a few minutes, from what appeared to be certain destruction, we had left the deck and ascended the fore-shrouds, and my companion had reached the cross-trees.

"Higher up"—and Ned gave me a hand, and placed me beside him. On the rigging of the mainmast we could dimly see three others of the crew: the sea had swallowed up the rest.

"We must lash ourselves to the sticks somehow," said Ned, when we had secured our footing; "if we don't, we sha'n't be able to hold on;" and he set to work, first securing me, and then himself, so that while our arms were at liberty it was impossible we could be dislodged from our refuge, except by the entire breaking up of the ill-fated vessel.

Astonishment kept me silent: the man who, of all the crew, had had the cruelest designs towards me, seemed now to be as solicitous for my safety as for his own, and spoke to me with a tremulous kindness which contrasted strangely with his former brutal manner. Perhaps the death of the captain, vile as he was, had cowed him. I supposed it might be so.

When securely tied, as I have described, I cast my eyes around and below; but no comfort or hope of escape could be obtained from the prospect. All around, as well as I could judge, was a raging, boiling sea; beneath us was the hull of the vessel, now completely submerged, and still, as Ned told me in a hoarse whisper, sinking, sinking deeper and deeper into the treacherous sand-bank—"sucked in, as the Good'n Sands always does—always," he said.

It was something in our favour, he also told me, that, in the way we had struck, the vessel was in nearly an upright position, and was sinking so. There was not much danger of her heeling over, therefore; and if we could live through the night, and keep above water, we might be taken off in the morning. But he spoke as though there was not much hope. We should be froze to death long before daylight, he said. And he said it with reason. In a quarter of an hour, thus exposed to the bitter wind and the snow-storm, which again set in with increased violence, I felt as though life was fast ebbing.

And let me say, though not boastingly, that I felt at that solemn time no strong desire for life. Perhaps the troubles and hard struggles through which I had already passed in my short existence, and the small prospect I had of any softening of my condition in life, might have reconciled me to the thought of an early death. But was there not something else which, at that time, calmed my mind, and enabled me to say, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth?" Yes, there was.

I was roused from these thoughts by the voice of my poor fellow sufferer, speaking low and quiveringly, and calling me by name.

"Roley, you are not gone off yet?"

"No, Ned."

"Don't ye tumble to sleep, whatever ye do: if you do, you won't wake agin."

"I'll try to keep awake," I said. In truth, however, I found it would require an effort to do this. The cold had already numbed me, and I had begun to feel drowsy.

"Roley, what was that you said to the skipper just now?" he asked, shuddering as he spoke, evidently at the recollection of the dreadful scene; "and what did you mean?"

"What did I say, Ned?" I asked, trying to rouse myself to speak.

"Don't you know? About Jesus Christ saving

"Oh yes, Ned; I'll tell you what I said, Ned, because it is for you and me and everybody, and you ought to know it if you don't. 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.' That was just it, Ned, word for word."

"Yes, that was it," said he eagerly; "but what does it mean?"

Mean! Didn't he know what it meant? I asked. Didn't he know the Lord Jesus Christ had come from heaven to die for sinners; that he did die for sinners; and that he rose again from the dead, and went to heaven to carry on there the work of salvation which

he had begun on earth? All this, and more, I said to Ned.

Well, to be sure, he *had* heard of Jesus Christ: there was a man once whom he had sailed with who had had something to say about Jesus Christ; but he (Ned) hadn't heeded. "Tell me about it, Roley," he went on.

As well as I could, I told him what I knew of Christ and his salvation. I cannot recall now—and it does not much matter—the words that I used; I only remember that I spoke of his mercy and his power, his readiness to hear prayer, and his willingness to save.

"It is too late now, I reckon," groaned poor Ned. "He wouldn't hear me now."

"No, no, it isn't too late, Ned; there was the man who was crucified along with him;" and I told him of that instance of Divine love.

"Roley, can't you make a bit of a prayer for us both?" said he, in a voice half choked with emotion. "What was it you told the skipper to say?"

"Lord, save me, or I perish!" that was it, Ned.

Ned repeated the words after me again, and again, and again. Did he know to whom he spoke? What the words meant? Did he pray from the heart? I cannot tell.

* * * * *

Hour after hour passed away, and we were still on our precarious refuge; but all bodily power had forsaken us, with almost all sense of pain; while the yet falling snow gathered about us, and, freezing as it fell, had stiffened not only our clothes about us, but

our very limbs. And now I saw why Ned had so carefully and securely lashed me and himself to the rigging: one by one, the three unfortunate men who had fled to the mainmast cross-trees, and who had not had presence of mind to secure themselves in like manner, fell from their unsteady footing into the raging water below, and were borne away, almost without a struggle or a cry. Meanwhile, either the water had risen, or the vessel had continued sinking deeper into the sand; for the waves seemed to get nearer and nearer, and perpetually dashed over us, half blinding us with their icy spray.

"Roley, I am going; I can't hold on much longer," he said.

"Try to keep up heart, Ned," I whispered in reply. Our strongest voice was reduced to a whisper now, and even this was an exertion almost too great for us. "It will be morning presently, and then, may be, we shall be seen."

A sudden thought seemed to strike the sailor when I said this—at least, he roused himself, and spoke with greater distinctness, and very earnestly.

"If they take you off alive, Roley, don't ye go back to that place, if you can help it."

"I won't, Ned," said I, readily enough; for I guessed of what place he was thinking.

"They won't be looking after you now, because they'll think you are safe over the water; and if they hear of this wreck they'll think you are drowned; but if they should know of your being back again, you'll be done for. Oh, may I be forgiven for what I have

had to do in that place! Oh, if I thought I would be forgiven!" the poor fellow groaned.

"‘He is able to save to the uttermost,’ Ned," I whispered.

"I donno—I hope so," said he; "it is very wonderful. But, Roley, you must forgive me too; for I was mixed up in the conspiracy against you."

"I do forgive you, Ned: don't think any more about that matter, but cry for mercy while you have the time."

He did not reply audibly—indeed, I did not hear him speak another audible word. I heard feeble mutterings, as though he was trying to speak, but presently even these ceased. I roused myself to call him, but no answer came. With the utmost difficulty I stretched out my hand and touched him, but he did not move. I remember little more, only that the noise of the wind and waves around me became more and more faint; and I think I recollect seeing, but not noticing, a faint streak of light eastward; and then all was indistinctness and wandering of mind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RESCUE.

"SEEMS to be a spark of life in this poor lad;"—I heard the words with very little interest, and without attaching the meaning to them. I was too far gone for that.

"Ease him down gently, Steb," were the next words; and I was made aware that I was being unlashd from the rigging, and lowered. With a strong and painful effort I opened my eyes for an instant only, but sufficiently long to see that it was daylight, and that above me, on the cross-trees, was a stout seafaring man, holding to a rope with one hand, and with the other grasping my jacket; while below was another man, in whose arms I was resting. The sea, I remember, was still very rough; but my senses were reeling, and I again closed my eyes in unconsciousness.

Presently I knew or believed myself to be in a boat, and a friendly arm was supporting my head, while an equally friendly hand was pouring a cordial into my mouth. Then I heard voices again—the same that had before spoken.

"Gently, Steb, you'll choke the poor chap; don't ye see as how he can't swallow more nor a thimbleful at a time?"

It was true enough that the strong liquor which they had poured down my throat nearly took away the little breath that remained in me, but it had the effect of causing me again to open my eyes, and to look round—wildly, I have no doubt.

I was lying along the bottom of a boat, near the stern, wrapped round with a rough coat, and another thrown over me. Two men were at the oars, and another was tending me, as I have described. Close beside me was my poor companion of the cross-trees, with his face uncovered. I roused myself, and faintly uttered his name—"Ned, Ned!"

"It's no use," said my preserver, compassionately; "he's gone, *he* is," and he drew his rough hand across his face; "he'll never see another Good'en wreck."

It was what I expected, yet it shocked and distressed me. Roughly as I had been used by him, our night's community in suffering had drawn us together; and his apparent earnestness in seeking for mercy, though at the eleventh hour, had left a vivid impression on my mind which still lingers with me.

I had not much consciousness left me. I only remember that the boat seemed to float over the rough sea like a cork; that my preserver was active in his endeavours to call back my flickering life, first by homœopathic doses of brandy from his flask, and then by gently chafing my half-frozen limbs; that the men at the oars pulled with a will; that presently I heard and felt the grating of the boat keel on the shingles; that I was lifted out of the boat, and borne I knew not whither; that I heard many pleasant and compassionate voices around me; that I felt my clothes removed; and, lastly, that the return of warmth to my body was accompanied by such agonies of pain, that I swooned.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BOATMEN'S COLONY.

IF my readers will bear in mind the excitement of mind and body through which I had recently passed, and the hardships to which I had been exposed in that

dreadful night on the Goodwin Sands, they will not be astonished that for many days I was very near the grave. I was, as I afterwards learned, in a high fever, and, the greater part of that time, insensible. On recovering—waking, as it seemed to me, out of a long, weary, troubled sleep—I was surprised to find how weak I had become, so that I could scarcely raise myself in bed. For I *was* in bed, which, though small, was a comfortable one. The room, too, was one of the smallest, not to be deemed a closet; and if I had not been convinced to the contrary, by the immovableness, or rather the motionlessness and stability of the dwelling, whatever or wherever it might be, I could easily have imagined myself shut up in the cabin of a ship afloat.

Everything around me was “ship-shape.” My bed-place was a sailor’s berth, and the room was fitted up with lockers, thus economizing space. The walls declined from the perpendicular just as in a ship’s cabin, and were hung with just the sort of articles for use or ornament that might be expected to be found there, and only there. The window, of four panes, was composed of thick greenish glass, and had evidently, I thought, at some time done duty in another habitation. So had the door, and the paneled wainscoting, which, small as was the room, was composed of a variety of patterns and fashions; and so had the large and costly looking-glass, now disfigured with a crack, which was let into the wall, and formed one of the larger panels. Ship-like also was the strong smell of tar or pitch which pervaded the room; and

ship-like the sound of murmuring waves, which reached me distinctly enough as I lay wondering for what further mysteries I was reserved.

There was not any mystery, however, in any of this. Simply, I had fallen into the hands of a kind, rough, benevolent, half-amphibious being, who dwelt—when on land—in a wooden tenement close upon the beach, and forming one of a little colony of boatmen's dwellings, having a bleak waste of sand behind and the ocean in front; but whose true home might be said to be on the sea.

Partly fishermen, partly smugglers, I am afraid—I may say this now, for the cottages have disappeared, and the colony has long since dispersed—my rescuer and his companions picked up a scanty, or at least a precarious addition to their "ways and means," by salvage from the Goodwin Sands, or, as they termed this grave of many a noble wreck, "the Good'ens"; but, unlike the wreckers of more inhospitable coasts, they were never known to lose an opportunity of saving life when it was in their power to do so, though to the certain diminution of their gains. Thus, though the wreck of the "General Washington" offered, in its breaking up, a tempting prize to Steb or Stephen Bourne, and his two fellow boatmen and partners, and though other boats were hastening to the sands to pick up its waifs and strays, humanity had impelled them to neglect their own interests in saving me, and in attempting to save my poor companion from perishing in the rigging. And when they found that I was rapidly sinking from the effects of cold and exposure

to the storm, Stephen Bourne had taken me to his own cottage, and brought back the flickering spark of life.

All this I learned afterwards; but before I had so far progressed as to be able to crawl out to the beach, I asked what had become of poor Ned; and learned that he had vainly battled with his last storm. He, and two or three bodies which had been washed on shore the next day, had been buried in one common grave.

I might dwell long on the homely hospitality I received from my preservers; I could tell how the women of the little colony vied with each other in their kindness to the shipwrecked youth, and how the children of all ages—for almost every cottage had its fair allowance of these—tempted me daily to play with them on the beach. I could say something, too, of the habits of the boatmen themselves—how they lounged about in calm sunshiny weather, smoking their short pipes on the beach, or seated in their boats, drawn up high and dry on the strand, as though neither sea nor boat, nor life itself, was much concern of theirs; but how, in rough and threatening weather, when other folk are glad of a roof to cover them, they were on the alert, and their boats manned in readiness for service, if not already miles out on the boiling waves. I could tell something, too, of mysterious trips on dark nights, when their success in fishing was too small, I fear, to account for the exultation expressed on their safe return; and I could repeat the stories I heard of dangers braved and escaped in their hazardous calling, as well as mournful histories of former

companions who had perished in it. There was, indeed, as far as I could learn or can remember, scarcely a family in the whole colony of which some member had not, at one time or other, and even recently, been lost at sea; and it seemed to be looked upon almost as a matter of course, that but few of the male inhabitants of the place would die either of old age or on their beds. Yet they did not seem unhappy at the thought. Habit, perhaps, had bred indifference, and the constant sight of danger, and contact with it, had deprived it of its terrors. All this, as I have said, I could enlarge upon; but I must hasten on my narrative.

I had been three or four weeks the guest of my preserver, and had almost recovered my lost strength, when a weekly newspaper, which, after doing duty in the public house of the neighbouring town, was circulated among those of the boatmen who could read, was lent to me. And there I saw, in the shipping intelligence, that the "General Washington," an outward-bound American barque, had been wrecked on the Goodwin Sands, and "all lives lost." That this was incorrect in its last clause, my readers know; but I was not sorry that the error had crept into public print. I had been painfully debating in my mind what course to take for the future; and though no other resource seemed open to me but to return to London, I could foresee the dangers which would beset me there, if it were known that I had escaped from the wreck. Now, however, those who were so concerned in my expatriation would in all probability

have obtained the intelligence which had accidentally met my eye, and, believing that I was drowned, would give themselves no further concern about me. It was true that accident might also reveal to them that I had escaped; and I well knew that if any of the iniquitous gang of Thieves' Castle were to light upon me, intelligence would be conveyed to the unhappy man who called himself my father; but this danger would not perhaps be greater in London than in the country; and at all events, trusting to the Divine Providence which had, as I firmly believed, watched over me up to that period, I determined to return to the only refuge I had, and the only mart for my future industry, praying that I might be lost in the crowd, and thus delivered from the unprovoked enmity and persecution of unreasonable men.

Perhaps there were other motives which urged me to venture so near to the lion's den. Many years had passed away since I saw the last of my kind and motherly protectress; but her image had not faded from my memory, nor affection towards her from my heart; and though all the efforts I had since made had been ineffectual in discovering her retreat, I did not yet despair of finding poor Peggy Magrath: but to attempt this, it was needful for me to be in London, for where else could she have taken refuge?

And then, my interest had not quite faded away as regarded my former little teacher and friend. I may even say that it had revived. I wanted some one to whom I could confide all the secrets of my past trials, my hopes and my fears, and who would sympathize

with and advise me. Who so likely to do this as Fanny Grey? I wished, too, to tell her that I had found the heavenly Friend of whom she had told me, and to make her heart glad with the tidings that I was no longer a sullen rebel against a kind and gracious Father in heaven and a loving Saviour. Yes, I would find out where Fanny was, and tell her what great things God had done for me, in putting his grace and fear into my soul.

I have since thought it strange that it did not once enter my thoughts, or my plans, to reveal to the police of those days the mysteries of the place which I have called 'Thieves' Castle, so far as I knew them. And yet it is not so strange, when it is remembered that in doing so I should have given evidence against my own father; and that, if he had been brought to justice, I should have had to appear against him as his accuser. Besides, what had I to reveal? I had been conveyed to a secret assembly of rogues, and thence conveyed to a yet more secret stronghold. I had there heard and witnessed much which had assured me that it was a den of villany; and, refusing to cast in my lot with those who lived by dishonesty, I had narrowly escaped being murdered, and had more narrowly still escaped from the hands and designs—whatever those designs were—of hardened kidnappers. All this I could have told; but what evidence could I have adduced in proof of my assertions? Where was this secret midnight resort? where the more secret stronghold? I could not tell. Then who could vouch for my respectability and truthfulness? No

one besides an old ostler, of no very unimpeachable character himself, and a drunken tailor. Added to this, I had had my own experience of police courts, and I did not want any further acquaintance with them. But I have wandered somewhat from my story : let me return.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I AM ON MY WAY TO LONDON, AND FALL IN WITH GOOD COMPANY.

THE kindness of the boatmen did not terminate with my restoration to strength. Unknown to me, they raised a subscription for my benefit in the town, which was about a mile from their colony ; and on the day of my departure I was not only reclothed from head to foot in a smart rig of sailors' slops, jacket, shirt, shoes, and tarpauling hat, but had in my pocket enough money to pay my expenses to London. I had not told my history to these rough-handed but kind-hearted people, nor were they curious to know it. They knew only that I had been shipwrecked, and that was enough.

"Look ye here, mate," said Stephen Bourne to me, and clapping his tarred hand on the shoulder of his eldest boy, a curly headed fellow, some ten or twelve years old, when I tried to express in suitable words, and with a full heart and overflowing eyes, my sense of his humanity and liberality—"Hold your tongue,

and look-ye here. Here's young Steb ; some of these days he'll be a sailor, d'ye see, and, mayhap, what's been your luck may be his luck ; and as God has helped me and young Steb's mammy to do to you, so I hope he'll help somebody else to do to him. So 'tis as broad as 'tis long, you see ; and if so be he never wants it, why so much the better ; and so here's good bye t'ye." And thus we shook hands and parted on the road that was to take me Londonwards.

It was a fine morning in early spring that I started on my walk of seventy or eighty miles ; but the distance was no matter, for I was not pressed for time, and my spirits rose with almost every step I took. This was the second time in my life that I had been many miles out of London, and I could but compare the circumstances of those two journeys. In the first, I was a poor, helpless, and all but deserted child, dependent on a stranger's affection. I was ignorant, and shut out almost entirely from the influence of right example and wholesome restraint—a stray waif of humanity, to be cast upon the festering heap of human corruption, to be trained to evil, and uncurbed by any intelligent notions of right and wrong. In the second, I was strong and active ; a good constitution, with God's blessing, had contributed to this, and the very trials and rough experiences through which I had passed had taught me to rely on my own exertions ; so that, though yet scarcely more than boy in years, I had none of the shrinking timidity of youth. More than all, I had learned to say, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

God is our refuge and strength ; a very present help in trouble." And when I thought of this, and of the way by which I had been led to an acquaintance with my heavenly Father, my heart seemed almost too full of joy to contain it.

With such reflections as these, I bounded along the roads, between hedgerows just putting out their early buds, and with larks overhead warbling their joyful songs, and primroses just peeping out of mossy banks, and giving me as much heartfelt pleasure as if they had been made for my especial delight. Men, too, were at work in the fields, and the occasional whistling of ploughmen and boys was pleasant to my ears ; while the passengers I met on the road spoke kindly and cheerily to me.

And so I went on that day, and the next, and the next, sleeping at night in decent village public houses, in clean and comfortable beds (for I had no vagrant look about me now, and I could pay the moderate demands of kind-hearted hostesses, who looked with interest on the sailor lad whom they probably supposed had just come home from sea); and lingering sometimes on my journey, or when I stopped in the daytime to rest, to admire the beautiful prospects of hill, valley, woodland, and farmland which lay in my route ; and at other times to examine the busy old towns through which I passed.

It was, then, the afternoon of the third day of my journey, and when I had accomplished about half the distance to London, that I was walking somewhat slowly and wearily along the turnpike road, when I

heard the sound of wheels behind, and in a minute or two a farmer's cart passed me, drawn by a strong horse, and driven by a stout comfortable looking man in the Kentish farmer's ordinary market dress of that day, namely, a broad-brimmed low-crowned hat, hard and thick enough for a helmet, and with a rough surface, technically, I believe, called "dog's hair"; a chocolate coloured silk kerchief loosely tied round his throat, above which appeared an ample allowance of shirt-collar; a smock-frock, white as driven snow, covering his ample chest and broad shoulders, with curiously worked shoulder straps, collar, and gussets, full and flowing in body and sleeves, and reaching down, when the wearer stood upright, to his knees, or a little below them; and stout buff-leather leggings, gaiters, or "spats," connecting the thick-nailed, tightly-laced half boots, which came up high above the ancles, with small-clothes of worsted cord, fastened at the knees with pearl buttons. Such was his attire.

It is almost superfluous to say that I did not notice all these items of costume as the vehicle and the driver rapidly passed me; I could scarcely have distinguished the farmer's features in that hasty glance. But he had not driven by me many yards before he pulled up, and waited till I was by his horse's side.

"Far to go this afternoon?" he cried out, with a hearty voice and tone which thrilled, I could not for the moment guess why, on my startled thoughts.

I promptly answered him, however, "Not very far I believe, sir—only to the next village, which is at no great distance."

"And that's four miles," said he. "Hard druv, are you? Tired?"

"Rather tired; I have had a long day's walk, sir," I replied, looking curiously and eagerly at the speaker; but again my glance was too hasty for me to tell what or who he was like.

"Thought so," said he; "could tell it by your limp. Have a ride? The place you speak of is all in my way home."

"Thank you, sir, I should be very glad——"

"Up, then, that's hearty," giving me a hand on to the footboard. "Now, then, Smiler: woa, good lass!"—this to his mare. "All right, is it?"—this to me.

"All right, sir," I said, taking a seat by his side, and in a moment we were in full trot along the road.

I knew him now; for getting into the cart I had caught a nearer and fuller sight of his face. He was my kind old friend of Covent Garden market.

"Where are you from?" he demanded, in a hearty tone, before I had had time to recover from my surprise.

"From near Deal," said I. "I have been shipwrecked on the Goodwins: but don't you know me?" I added.

"Know you, eh? Well, let's have a look;" and he turned and honoured me with a broad stare, but without any other result than a shake of the head.

"I know you though, sir," I said; "you were very good to me at one time."

"Don't know anything about it," said he. "There's some mistake, I reckon."

"No, there is not indeed," I said, earnestly. "Don't

you remember Covent Garden market, and Roland Leigh?"

"Hallo!" he cried out; "why, you don't mean to say so? let's look at you again. *You* Roland Leigh—little Roley, as I used to call you?"

"Yes, sir, I am; and you don't know how much I have wanted to see you since then, to thank you for your kindness."

"Oh, that was nothing. But come now, tell us all about it. Where have you been? What have you been doing? I must know all about it, because——"

"Because *why*, sir?" I asked, when he stopped short.

"Well, never mind about the *why* and the *wherefore*," he replied. "How was it I lost sight of you all at once?"

I told him of my accident at Smithfield, and my long nursing in the hospital; and how that, when I afterwards went to look for him in the market, he had disappeared.

"Sure," said he; "that was the time I sold my old farm up London way, and bought a bigger one down here; so you see I'd done with Covent Garden from that time. Well, how have you been getting on since then, Roley? and how came you to be a sailor?"

I was not a sailor, I explained; I had only begun to be one when the vessel I was in was wrecked. And, without telling him how I had got on ship-board, I gave him the particulars of the recent disaster.

"It was a merciful Providence that saved your life, Roley," said my old friend; "and I reckon you won't

be in a hurry to go to sea again, eh? But you haven't told me all you have been doing all these years."

"I should like to tell you all, sir, if you would not mind hearing it," I said; for a sudden impulse urged me to open my mind to the farmer. Perhaps he would believe me, and would give me some good advice about my future course. And if he did not, and should look upon me suspiciously, I should only be where I was before. So I began at the beginning, and told him, in short, the history of the last four or five years, some of my earlier story he already knew. He heard me to the end, only interrupting me now and then with a question, or interposing an ejaculatory sort of note-of-admiration syllable, but whether of incredulity or sympathy I could not exactly judge. When I had finished my narrative, he said nothing for some time, and we drove on in silence. Presently however, he suddenly cleared up:—

"So you met with poor Fanny Grey's father, eh? and your own father too; and you have learned to read the Bible; and you've *yarned* your bread honestly, Roley?"

"I hope so, sir," said I.

"Hope so! then you aren't sure of it?"

"Yes, sir, I am sure of it," I said, quite calmly and confidently.

"I believe you, lad," he said, looking me full in the face again;—and I could see at a glance, as he turned his face towards me, that he had not been unmoved by my story, though, indeed, I only told it simply, and just as everything had happened;—"yes, I believe you,"

he repeated, "I believe every word you have told me, and you're a fine lad: I always said you'd got the right stuff in you if you could be got to put it to the right use. And the Bible's the book to tell us how to do that, eh? And so you are going to London again! What will you do when you get there? Have you any friends?"

I did not know. I could go back to my old employment at Smithfield; but I should try to get into more respectable service, if I could. Such was the purport of my reply.

"Ah, to be sure! Smithfield is a queer place for a young fellow; and as to that, Covent Garden isn't much better perhaps. Well, here we are though," he continued, breaking off his speech, and turning up a lane, towards a comfortable looking farm-house about a hundred yards or so from the turnpike road: "now then, Smiler; gently, poor old mare; she smells the corn-bin, she does."

"If you please, sir, I'll get down now, and thank you for giving me the lift," I said.

"No, no," said he, "we won't part so, neither: 'there's a bit of bread and cheese, or bacon, or summut, in the cupboard, I reckon; and I shouldn't wonder if you're hungry, I shouldn't; and——here we are;" and as he said this, the horse stopped of its own accord at the gate of the farm-house. At this moment the door opened, and at the same time a young woman tripped towards us.

"Is it you, uncle?" she asked, before she had reached the gate.



AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

“Ay, it is me, Fanny, and somebody else,” said the farmer, throwing the reins to a labouring man who had made his appearance, and springing from the cart with more agility than his great bulk would have promised. “Now then, Ro——, out with you; or shall I call Fanny to help you?” he half whispered.

“Fanny! Fanny!” I exclaimed, like one waking out of a dream, and jumping out of the cart with such headlong precipitancy that I had nearly fallen. “If you please, sir, do tell me whose voice it was I just heard.”

“Whose, Roley? Why, Fanny Grey’s to be sure.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LITTLE FANNY AGAIN MAKES HER APPEARANCE.

I SHALL not attempt to describe my unexpected meeting with my former little teacher and friend; how, after the goodnatured farmer and ex-Covent Garden salesman hurried me into the large stone-paved kitchen, and bade Fanny look at me in the face, she lifted her bright eyes, wonderingly at first; and then, when some faint gleams of imperfect recognition broke in upon her mind, blushing; and then, when I put out my hand, and said, “Don’t you know me, Fanny?” how a flush of surprise lighted up her face, and she cried out, “Roland, Roland, how glad I am!” All this my readers may fancy for themselves, as also how

foolish (I doubt not) I looked when, thus taken unawares, I could only say in reply—what was but an echo of her words—"O Fanny, and how glad I am too!"

And how pleased the broad-shouldered farmer, Fanny's uncle, was at having brought us together, I need not waste words to say; how he made a pretence of not noticing us, while he bustled about, putting away his whip, and hanging up his hat, and unloading his great pockets of sample bags, and packets of purchases he had made at the market town, but all the while watching us closely, with a broad benevolent smile on his pleasant face; and how the farmer's wife—Fanny's aunt, and a smart little woman, as plump in proportion as her husband, but not to be compared with him in positive measurement, either of length or breadth—stood looking on with a sort of half comprehension of the scene, which ripened into a full understanding of the merits of the case when Fanny's uncle said to her, in a loud aside: "This is the little Roland Leigh, Jenny, that we have often talked about, and wondered what had become of." I need not make a long story of that.

Then, there were three or four youngsters, of different ages of course, looking on with silent amazement, till one of them ran up to Fanny and caught hold of her dress, crying out in tones of mingled alarm and defiance, "You shan't take cousin Fanny away, you shan't. Father won't let you, will you, father?" Whereat the farmer burst out into a loud "ha! ha!" which seemed greatly to relieve him, before he

answered, "I reckon not, Bill : father'll see all about that."

There was a rosy-faced damsel, too, with a baby in her arms, who stared mightily at the whole scene, which, happily for the principal actors, was a very short one ; for in less than a quarter of an hour after the cart drove up to the gate, we were all sitting round a large oak table, spread with a clean white cloth, on which was the "bread and cheese, or bacon, or summut," of which my big white-frocked friend had confidently spoken.

But was this the little Fanny—the pale, thin, neglected, half-fed, half-clad, frightened child—I had known years and years ago ? grown now into a—("pretty," "handsome," "beautiful," have all trembled on the point of my pen, but I am not certain that either of these adjectives would be strictly correct or appropriate)—so let me write, a very interesting young woman, fresh-coloured and plump (everybody in the house seemed plump, even to the dogs and cats, of which there were plenty, as I afterwards found), trimly clothed in the fashion of that day, and with no more timidity in her manner than was natural and becoming : grown and changed into all this, I say, it was natural for me to look again and again into her face, to see that I had not fallen into some extraordinary mistake. But there was no mistake about it : it was really and truly Fanny Grey ; there could be no mistaking the bright, quick, sparkling eyes which I had so often seen filled with tears.

But the more I looked, the more awkward I felt.

My ideas and recollections of little Fanny were all put to the rout, and I could only look upon myself as partaking of the goodnatured farmer's hospitality under false pretences, if it was afforded me as an old acquaintance of Fanny Grey.

I think that Fanny's uncle penetrated my thoughts, for he exerted himself to put me more at ease. He heaped my plate with food, made me tell the story of the shipwreck on the "Good'ens," and in return he gave me to understand that by comparing notes, or rather by putting together stories, name, and dates, after Fanny came to live with him, they had easily discovered that *her* little Roland of Whiskers' Rents and *his* little Roland of Covent Garden market were the same; also that Fanny's remembrances of what she called my friendship for her, and poor Mrs. Magrath's kindness, and of my unhappy condition, had been talked about in that very room where we were then having supper, scores of times, till "little Roland" had become almost a household word; and that the story of my unfortunate Sunday-school adventure was known by heart, and also my being turned out of Whiskers' at night, without knowing where I was to lay my head; and how they had often wondered what had become of me. All this I heard, and much more, till my heart was full. I could not have believed that any one would have thought about me, a poor "City Arab," except God and poor Peggy Magrath. But so it was.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DAFFODIL FARM.

I DID not leave Daffodil Farm that night; the hospitable farmer would not hear of it. There were more spare bed-rooms in his house, he said, than there were in the Six Bells further on; and, now I had come across him again, he was not going to let me slip through his fingers so easily. So I thankfully agreed to his proposal, backed as it was by the ready consent of his good-tempered wife; and before I was shown into the snug little chamber, I had a long conversation with Fanny, to whom I told all my history since we parted, and showed her, without returning it, the little bag and its contents which she had thrust into my hand on that dreary evening. She seemed quite amused that I had taken such care of it, and kept it so long, and so glad that, in all the scenes I had passed through, I had not had real occasion to break in upon the little hoard. So that matter was settled.

And how glad she was that I had learned to trust God as my friend, and had been able to resist temptation, and earn my bread honestly! And how sad she looked when I spoke of her father—grateful, too, when I acknowledged how I was indebted to him for almost all the learning I had obtained! And how her tears fell and her colour left her cheeks, when I told of the discovery of *my* father, and the near escapes I had

passed through ! All this it is unnecessary to dwell upon.

Fanny, also, had her story to tell. It was not so long as mine—not so stirring, perhaps. It was only this: she had accompanied her poor father from one miserable lodging to another; but, wherever they went, his unhappy propensity accompanied him, and, of course, their constant attendants were destitution and shame. At last, her uncle Blake (this was the first time I had heard my old Covent Garden friend's name), who had often, but unavailingly, tried to help his brother-in-law, by loans of money which were never returned, and gifts of money which were directly squandered on drink, refused to do any more for a man who thus abused his kindness. He offered, however, to relieve him of his little daughter, and to bring her up with his own children; but Fanny would not leave her father until——

“He told me you forsook him—ran away, indeed,” I said, when she came to this part of her short history.

“Did he say that, Roland?” sighed Fanny, very sorrowfully, while the tears ran freely down her cheeks. “Poor father ! he should not have said so. Indeed, I would never have left him if I could have helped it; but—but he had to go to prison for debt, and I was left all alone. I was three days without anything to eat,” she whispered, with a shudder at the remembrance of her sufferings; “and I thought—but it was very wrong, Roland—I fancied God had forgotten me, and would let me die without help. Oh, it

was very dreadful for a time: but the last day, I did not feel hungry at all, only very, very weak and faint."

"Poor Fanny!" I said, and I could not help crying from sympathy, "in all I have passed through I have never suffered anything like that. So, then, you came away to your uncle Blake; but how did you manage to get all this way from London?"

"No," said Fanny, "I did not come then, that is, I did not come by myself: I did not even know where my uncle lived; for he had not been to see us for so long: it was of no use, he said. But somehow he heard of father's being in prison; I think father wrote to him about it, but I am not sure; so he went all the way from here to London and found me out, and brought me away with him. And oh, Roland, you don't know what a kind heart he has; and if you had seen how he cried—such a big man as he is, too!—when he saw how near I was to being perished, you _____"

"I can understand that, Fanny," said I. "I am sure your uncle is a very kind man, by the little I have known of him."

Let me observe, that we were all alone when this conversation took place. It was, as I have said, a bright moonlight evening, and Fanny had taken me out into her own flower garden. There were not many flowers, to be sure, at that time of the year, but we did not go out exactly to look at the flowers.

"Ah!" she replied, "you have not seen so much of him as I have; you must know a great deal of uncle

Blake to know really how kind he is ; and he is a good man too."

"I am sure he is," said I ; "and so, when he found you, he brought you away ? I like him for that."

"Yes ; but he did not let my father lie in prison long. He paid his debts, and gave him some more money, only he said he must keep me here. And oh, Roland, poor father said——no, I will not tell you what he said ; only he should not say that I ran away from him. But I am glad, so glad, you found him out, Roland, and that he was able to teach you anything. Oh, if poor father would but keep from——." And Fanny sobbed so that she could not complete the sentence.

"I think we had better not say anything more about father now, Fanny. I think you must be very happy here," I added, turning the conversation ; and I sighed when I had said it, for I remembered my own friendless and hopeless condition, and how soon I should be again cast into the turmoil of London streets—a City Arab still, without character or recommendation to help me onward and upward.

"I am very happy," she replied ; "only when I think——oh yes, I am very happy indeed."

"It must be very pleasant to live in the country," said I.

I need not repeat any more of this conversation, and, indeed, not much more passed ; for a few minutes afterwards we were sitting before the blazing fire, with the farmer on one side smoking his pipe, and Mrs. Blake on the other knitting stockings, I believe. It

is very strange, perhaps, but I really do not remember what Fanny was doing ; nor do I recollect much more that passed all that evening, only that when the kitchen clock—a dwarfish, black-bodied, whimsically shaped affair, with an enormous head and face—gave warning for nine, in a kind of sturdy grunt the farmer laid down his pipe, Mrs. Blake left off knitting, Fanny reached a great Bible from a shelf, and, for the first time in my life, I joined in family worship. Half an hour later, and I was fast asleep in a bed which made me dream I was in Covent Garden market again, for the sheets were fragrant with lavender. In spite of my dream, however, I slept soundly and woke refreshed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

I MAKE ANOTHER ACQUAINTANCE.

I DID not leave Daffodil Farm the next day, nor the next, nor for many days. Why did I want to hurry away, Mr. Blake wished to know ; was I not among friends ? And he would find me something to do, he would warrant. He would take care, he said laughing, that I should *yarn* my bread and cheese, and bacon, and so forth.

I was nothing loth to prolong my sojourn there. I knew well enough that I could not look upon Daffodil Farm as my home ; that I had no claim on the farmer's hospitality, so thinly disguised under the plea of his

“making me useful”; that I must shortly resume my wanderings, and battle again in the rough world as I best might, with no one to sympathize with me. But I was not unthankful for the respite; and so, from day to day, I remained at the farm till a month had passed away.

And oh, how quickly it seemed to pass! If my readers will remember that I had grown up from childhood to youth, and from youth almost to manhood, and never till now known the comfort of a decent home, had never seen domestic harmony, and knew nothing of heart religion in family life; that, in fact, I had ever been, as I have called myself, “a City Arab,” yet with yearnings after better things, and a soul at least partially, and I trust savingly, enlightened by divine truth,—if my readers will think of all this, they will not wonder that I was easily persuaded to stay another day, and another, and another, at the farm, till, as I have said, a month passed quickly away.

Mr. Blake had not many visitors; but there was one who, two or three times during that month, called at Daffodil Farm, and whom I have good reason to remember. He was an old gentleman: his name was Simmonds, and he was the minister of the parish. I was struck with his appearance the first time I saw him, which was in the pulpit of his little church. His hair was silvery white, parted in the middle, and falling in long loose folds down to his shoulders. His countenance was very pleasant, and yet majestic: he had bushy white eyebrows, and large, bright, piercing, sparkling eyes, very deep set in their sockets; and the

deep tones of his voice—a little tremulous with age—rolled through the small place of worship, not loud, but in a full volume of sound, and woke the echoes in the gothic roof of the building. But what most aroused my attention and sympathies was the similarity between that first sermon I heard him preach, and those I had heard from the lips of Mr. N., of whom I have before told.

It was the day after the first Sunday that he called at the farm; and, as Fanny afterwards told me, he was curious to know who the sailor boy could be whom he had seen in the farmer's large family pew. On the following day I was sent by the farmer to the minister's house with a packet of garden seeds, I believe, which I was to be sure to deliver into Mr. Simmond's own hands. I presume that I was expected, and that the packet of seeds was a sort of innocent contrivance for bringing us together; but I did not suspect this then, and was surprised at being shown at once, by a servant in grey livery, into a large library, where I was requested to wait till his master could see me.

I had not long to wait, but long enough to look round with wonder, and almost with awe, upon the treasures of learning the room must have contained. Large and handsome presses, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, loaded with volumes of all sizes, many of them in rich bindings, occupied one entire side of the large apartment; and I remember entering into a rather abstruse, or, at least, a difficult calculation, as to what all those hundreds of books must have cost.

There were other evidences of wealth around me. On the other walls were large paintings in broad carved and gilded frames. A carpet, so soft and beautiful that I hesitated almost to set my feet upon it, covered the floor ; and crimson damask curtains, glossy as silk, were partially drawn, so as to cast a subdued but rich shade over the apartment. I noticed also several marble busts placed in niches around the wall ; but there is no need, even if I were now able, to give my readers even a cursory and superficial inventory of the contents of Mr. Simmonds' library. I afterwards learned that the excellent owner of all these luxuries was a gentleman of large wealth, and that the income of his clerical profession, in addition to large sums from his private income, were devoted to objects of benevolence.

I was glancing timidly around me when the door opened, and Mr. Simmonds entered. He smiled kindly, and, taking the packet from my hands, told me to be seated.

I have often, since then, had occasion to remark the difference there is between the conduct and bearing of really well-bred gentlemen of wealth and position, and those of others who have arrived at these distinctions without having been prepared for them by early training. Wide as the separation was between the aged, wealthy, and dignified owner of that well furnished mansion, and the friendless, poor, and desolate youth in his presence, he neither addressed me with haughty reserve, nor overwhelmed me with condescension. Very simply and kindly he told me that he had

heard some part of my history from "our mutual friend"—those were his words—"our mutual friend, Mr. Blake;" and would I have any objection to gratifying him with my story, told in my own words? In a few minutes I was so much at my ease that I lost sight of the great gulf between his apparent riches and my poverty; the grandeur of his grand library had vanished from before my eyes; and, to my after astonishment, when I recollected the particulars of the interview, I was soon in the full and animated current of my narrative, beginning from the scene in my poor mother's death chamber, to my shipwreck on the Goodwin Sands.

I remember now, though I was not conscious at the time, how the eyes of my listener were fixed upon me all the while I was speaking—not with a rude repulsive stare, but with a softened look which only encouraged me to go on; but I saw, even then, that at some parts of my story he was moved in spirit, and heaved more than one deep sigh. Now and then he smiled, too, as when I told him of poor Peggy's unexpectedly finding herself in the village stocks, and of Tom Smithers' unwelcome shower-bath in the prison yard. But when I came to the discovery of my father in the haunt of wickedness I have elsewhere described, I saw, and loved him for it, that his eyes glistened with tears, while he said in a low voice, "Do not tell me more of that sad circumstance than you please, I beseech you."

I remember, too, a few short sentences which escaped his lips at other parts of my history, and which seemed to be spoken more to his own mind than to me; for

instance, when I repeated what the bookseller had said to me, he muttered, "Ah! that is too much the way of the world: keep them down, poor things, when they are down, crush their aspirations for better things, throw obstacles in their way; and then wonder that the world is so full of misery! It will not always be so."

Twice or thrice, too, my patient listener interrupted me to ask a question, but it was with an apology for the liberty he was taking; and when my story was finished, he thanked me for the pleasure I had given him; and so we shook hands and parted.

I shall have occasion to write about Mr. Simmonds again; but I must first turn to another subject.

While I was at Daffodil Farm I had plenty of opportunity for noticing what a favourite Fanny Grey was with all about her, and how kindly she was treated by her uncle and aunt; but this was a matter of course, it would have been passing strange had she not; for they treated everybody around them kindly.

"I had both kindness and unkindness shown me when I was a boy, a poor orphan boy," said Mr. Blake to me one day when we were walking across his fields to a distant part of his farm; "so I ought to know the difference; and I do know it, Roley; and I wouldn't—— but there, never mind: I never told you, did I, Roley, about my first going to London, along with my poor dear sister Fanny—our little Fanny's poor mother?"

No, never: would he tell me now?

"To be sure: why not?" said he; and he gave me the following history.

CHAPTER XL.

A HISTORY.

"You have seen summut of typhus fever, Roland; you know what that is, eh?" said Mr. Blake.

I could answer "yes" to this; for I had horrible remembrances of Whiskers' Rents.

"Ah, sure; but you mustn't think that you Londoners have it all to yourselves," said the farmer.

"I dare say not, sir," I murmured.

"I told you once, as how all I had to begin the world with was a dozen bunches of radishes, but I didn't tell you that it was all owing to the typhus fever. This was how it happened. There never was a prettier place, I think, than the village I was born and brought up in till I was about a dozen years old. It was down in ——shire, near upon thirty miles from London. There was a big family of us then—father and mother, three sisters and four brothers, reckoning poor sister Fanny and me; but father was a hard-working man, and we never knew what want was.

"But, pretty as the village was," my kind friend went on, after a minute or two of silence, occupied by him, I have no doubt, in mournful remembrances of those old times, "it had its troubles, and one of these came on us sudden and unexpected like: it was the typhus fever. It went into a'most every house in the village; and when it got there, there it stopped. I

dunno what brought it, and I can't tell now; but I know there was a great black ditch full of sludge that ran at the backs of some of the houses; and some said that the fever was bred there. Very like it was, I should say, for I have heard of such things since then; but the people wouldn't have it so. They said the ditch had been there as long as they remembered, and longer, and never had bred a fever; and why should it then? But whether it was or wasn't in the ditch, the fever was in a'most all the houses, Roland; and it got into ours. One after another of us took it, Roland; and the end of it was, that father and mother and all, except poor Fanny and I, died; we were left alone in the world, and the parish officers came and took us away to the work'us.

"Poor sister was two years younger than me," the farmer went on; "and she was a tender little thing. Her heart was a'most broke, it was, with losing father and mother and brothers and sisters, let alone being sent to the work'us and put along with strange people; but she might a' got over it in time, poor thing, if they had shown any pity. But they didn't. We didn't get used well, Roland; and one day, when we hadn't been there three months, Fanny comes running up to me, crying as if her heart 'ud break; and she took me aside to a corner of the yard where nobody saw us, and she whispers, 'Look here, William, and see what a woman has been a-doing to me:' and she showed me her arms and hands and neck, almost covered with black bruises, and marks of a stick in thick weals.

"I couldn't stand that," continued the kind-hearted man; "and when the poor child threw herself on my neck, and with sobs begged me to take her away from that terrible place, I says, 'Cheer up, Fanny; you shan't stop here.'"

"And we didn't, Roland. I needn't tell you how I managed it, with the help of a poor old cripple, who gave me fourpence-ha'penny, all the money he had, to help us on. Two days afterwards, before daylight, we were on the road to London. I didn't reckon they would come after us, Roland, when once we had got away; but whether they did or not, I never knew. They didn't catch us anyhow; and after two days' hard walking, we found ourselves getting into London with only a ha'penny, and poor Fanny dead beat, poor thing!"

"How did you manage the nights you were on the journey?" I asked, thinking of my former experiences of tramping through the country with Peggy Magrath.

"Oh, fair enough, Roland. The first night we crept into a waggon lodge, and slept in a cart that had got nice high sides, and some straw at the bottom. The next night wasn't so good. There was nothing but a haystack to shelter us. However, it might ha' been worse, for they had been cutting it that day, and there was a good deal of loose hay scattered about, so we covered ourselves up with it; and, being a clear night, we didn't come to no harm"

"And when you got to London, sir?"

"Ah, that was summut of a puzzler, that was, Roley," said he, scratching his big head at the recollec-

tion, apparently, of this boyish perplexity and distress. "I had never been to London, and knew nothing about it, only as I had heard say that it was the place for them as wanted to get a living independent, and make their way in the world: and that's why I took the London road, you see. But when we got there, my heart began to sink.

"It wasn't right into the thick of London we'd got, you understand, Roley," Mr. Blake went on, "but just into the outside rind like; long rows of smartish sort of houses, with gardens afore 'em, and now and then gaps 'atween one house and the next. Well, Roley, there was one house as stood back a longish bit, and 'atwixt it and the road was a good thick shrubbery, lots of laurels and bays close together, and covering over all the ground. There was a gate, which was half way open; and thinks I, if we could get into the thick of them shrubs; and I says so to Fanny, in a whisper.

"'Oh yes,' says she; 'for I can't walk much further, William dear.' So in we crept, right through the gateway in among the shrubs. And it was't a bad shelter, anyhow. There was one big shrub with thick branches hanging all round, close to the ground, with a nook inside roomy enough for us to curl up in, and all as dry and warm and snug as if we had been in a bed a'most; and the ground was soft and mossy and dry. Poor sister was soon asleep with her head in my lap, after she had said her little prayer—a prayer mother had taught us both. But I didn't get to sleep so soon. I didn't want to distress Fanny, but I was

pretty much down, as I said ; and I kept awake thinking of what I should do the next day, with only a ha'penny to buy us food. At last, however, I dropped off, and was pretty nigh as sound as Fanny, when I wakes up in a fright, and hears somebody going down the path and shutting the gate. 'Twas a man, for I heard his voice, speaking to himself, and saying, 'I've left the key indoors ; but if I don't lock it nobody won't know ; and I am not going to come back again,' says he. Glad enough I was to hear it ; for the shrubbery was all railed in with iron rails, and the gate was an iron gate ; and if we had been locked in, we couldn't ha' got out when we wanted."

"That was a narrow escape," said I.

"There was a narrower than that to come, though," he went on ; "for the man hadn't got back to the house-door, before I heard a sniff—sniff—sniffing round our hiding place ; and then 'Yap, yap, yap !' barked a little dog, running round and round us, and scratching up the ground.

" 'Hush !' says I to Fanny, who was woke up with the noise.

" 'Snap, Snap, Snap ! come here, sir,' called out the man ; but the little dog only barked the more.

" 'What's the matter, John ? What's poor Snap barking so at ?' said a 'ooman's voice. I reckon 'twas the missus's, and it sounded as if she had opened a window.

"The man, not knowing the real cause of the dog's irritation, said it was the cats. And, sure enough, just then I heard a scramble and a squall, for there

was a cat in the shrubbery ; and the little dog was after that as soon as he hears it, meaning to have another turn at us afterwards, I reckon. But before he could get back, the man catches him up, and then there was a squeak and a banging of doors ; and all the rest of the night we were quiet as could be. That was our first night in London, Roland."

"And after that, how did you get on?" I wanted to know.

"I am just coming to that, Roland," said the farmer. "As soon as it was light, we were out in the road again ; and the first person we saw was a milkman.

"‘Please,’ said I, going up to him, ‘will you let sister have a drink of milk for a ha’penny?"

"‘No, I won’t,’ says he, very rough ; and poor Fanny burst out a-crying. But the man didn’t mean it rough. ‘What’s the matter with the child?’ he asked ; ‘and what are you both doing out of your beds this time o’ morning? And where do you come from?’ he says, looking sharp at us both. So I tells him our story, Roland ; and, touched with pity, he gives us both a good measure full of milk, which freshened us up a bit.

"‘And now,’ says he, ‘you silly little creatures, the best thing you can do is to go back again where you come from. You mustn’t be wagrantizing about London, sleeping in people’s shrubberies like that. You can’t pick up money in London streets.’

"‘No, says I, ‘but I means to *yarn* some ; and I don’t mean to go back, and let sister be knocked about

like that ;' and I showed the man the bruises on her arms.

" 'Well,' says he, 'it's a shame to see a poor child used like that ; but, you know, you're like to starve in this cruel place, and that's worse than being knocked about a bit.'

" 'I didn't mean to starve, nor to let sister starve, I said ; I meant to work. And then the man laughed, and says he, 'Come along with me, and I'll get somebody else to talk to you, for I have no time to spare.'

" 'You won't send us back to the work'us, will you ?' said I, drawing back a little, and holding little sister very tightly by the hand.

" 'No,' says he, 'I don't mean that.' So we went along with him till we came to a little green-grocery shop, where we followed him in. 'Jane,' says he, to a youngish woman, dressed in black, and with a widow's cap on, 'Jane, here's a funny start, here is.' 'What is it, Sam ?' she asked. 'Why,' he says, 'here's a couple of young birds out of the country, without 'ere a nest, and I want you to take care of 'em till I come back, and see what's to be done. Give 'em a breakfast, Jane ; for they wants it : ' and then he tells our story to his sister.

" 'She was very kind : she took us into her little room behind the shop, washed us, and gave us plenty to eat ; and about ten o'clock the milkman comes back again.

" 'Now,' says he, sitting down and looking very sharp at me, 'I am a poorish man : all I have got to live by is a couple of cows and a few acres of ground

that I rent, and I have got plenty of young'uns of my own. Sister Jane, too, is a poor woman and a widow, with a little girl to provide for, and is in trouble sometimes about making both ends meet. You know what that means ?'

" 'Yes, sir,' says I.

" 'Very well,' he went on, 'then I needn't tell you any more about it; only it stands to reason that we can't be burdened with more mouths than we have to feed a'ready.'

" 'If you please, sir,' said I, 'I'd like to *yarn* all I eat, and all sister eats too.'

" 'That's well said,' said the milkman, 'and I like the look of you, and I think your story is a true one: but then——'

" 'Sam,' said the young widow, when he had got as far as that, 'Sam, come here; I want to say a word.' So the man went out with his sister, and presently they came back again.

" 'Now, my little fellow,' says he, 'I'll tell you what we have agreed upon. We'll try it on for a week, and you shall begin to-day. This is radish time,' says he, 'and you shall have a dozen bunches of radishes to begin with. You'll have to go out in the streets with 'em, and to people's houses, and try to sell them; and your little sister shall stop here with my sister. If you *yarns* money enough that way to pay for board and lodging for both of you, you shall have board and lodging, so long as you behave as you ought.'

" 'Thank ye, thank ye !' says I, starting up; and poor sister Fanny clapped her hands for joy.

“‘Stop a bit,’ says the milkman; ‘I haven’t said all my say yet, and perhaps you won’t thank me then.’ Down I sat again at that, Roland, and sister left off clapping her hands.

“‘I told you,’ the milkman went on, ‘that we can’t afford to keep you, and we don’t like you to be wagrantizing about London; you’d starve, or else come to summut wuss. Now,’ said he, very solemnly, ‘if this line o’ business fails, you’ll have to go back again to the work’us. I say it, and I mean it; for I shall write to the people there to send for you.’ And then he shakes hands with us both, and goes away.

“And now, Roland,” continued the farmer, “you know my story so far—how it was I started in the world with only a dozen bunches of radishes and an old basket, and how it is I was taught a lesson or two that I hope I haven’t quite forgot. I needn’t make the rest of it much longer,” he said. “I soon started off with my basket of radishes, and there was no occasion for the milkman to send to the parish officers. We lived with his sister ever so many years, and Fanny soon learned to make herself useful. The widow got to be fond of Fanny, and I got fond of the widow’s little Jane——”

“Ah!” said I, a light breaking in upon me, “then Mrs. Blake was——”

“Sure,” said Mr. Blake, “that’s it, Roland; you have guessed right. Little Jane got to be my Jane, after a bit; but we waited a good while first. We weren’t married till after her poor mother died; and afore we married, I had got a bit of ground alongside

of Jenny's uncle's—the milkman, you know—and had begun to go to Covent Garden market, where you first saw me, Roland. And so we got on bit-by-bit like, with honesty, industry, and God's blessing, as Jenny often says."

"And your sister?" said I, inquiringly.

He heaved a deep sigh. "That's the most dismal part of the story," said he. "Poor dear Fanny! to think of her being taken in to marry such a ——. Don't talk about it, Roland. It makes the old Adam get uppermost, it does. Poor dear Fanny!"

I did not say any more, of course, and we finished our walk in silence; but from that time I could easily understand how it was that Fanny Grey—my little Fanny of Whiskers' Rents, and his sister's Fanny—had so large a share of his tender love. I could better appreciate, too, the kindness I had received from him, and the confidence with which he had treated me.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE.

WHILE considering how to begin this chapter, a silly moth has been fluttering round my solitary candle. See, its wings are nearly scorched, and it flies away—to return again. That was a near escape, little moth; but I must put a stop to this dangerous sport. Ha! the cold night air outside the window is not so pleasant; and, if you think at all, you no doubt think me

a hard-hearted monster for having disturbed your pleasant dreams; but it was all for your good, believe me.

Now, I was very like that moth; and Daffodil Farm was the candle. Why should I disguise it? I began to think more of Fanny Grey than I should have done; and, in thinking of her, I forgot for a time my own poverty and degradation—forgot that I was a City Arab—forgot that I had many, many weary steps to take—forgot that, in the day-dreams in which I indulged, I was taking advantage of the unsuspecting kindness and generous hospitality of my large-hearted host.

It was natural for me to think of Fanny. Was she not, after my poor mother and Peggy Magrath, my earliest friend? It was natural for me to admire Fanny Grey, for she was so active, and good-humoured, and sensible. It was natural, also, for me to love her; did not everybody love her? But I had no business to love Fanny Grey, as I was, at least, in great danger of beginning to love her, foolish moth that I was.

There was another who thought so too—the farmer's wife, Fanny's aunt. I suppose it is true that women have quicker perceptions in these matters than men-folk. I am sure that Mrs. Blake was neither a match-maker nor a match-breaker; nor do I know, to this day, how she found out so correctly what was passing in my mind, almost before I knew it myself; but she did find out. I did not notice then, but I remembered afterwards, how, when I had been only three or four weeks at Daffodil Farm, her manner towards me became altered. She was not less kind than at first, but she

was more watchful. I remembered too that she contrived, without appearing to do so, that Fanny and I should not be much together. I have told how, on the evening of my unexpected arrival at the farm, I had a long conversation with Fanny in the garden. It happened that there were several bright, mild, moonlight nights in succession; and as evening was the only time that we saw much of each other, and then only in the common living room of the farm, where all the family met, it was natural enough for us to get out into the garden a few minutes every evening, to talk about those old times at Whiskers' Rents, and to fill up the outlines of our separate histories. Dark nights came, however, and then we had none of these garden conversations; but moonlight nights came again; and then, perhaps, we remembered that we had something to tell, forgotten before; or, perhaps, to talk about our future plans, and what I should do when I got back again to London. But we were to have no more of these garden dialogues. Mrs. Blake was sure that evening air was very bad to be out in, and that moonlight was weakening to the sight, and she wished Fanny wouldn't expose herself to the damp—the evenings, just then, were “as dry as a bone,” interposed her honest, obtuse husband; but he got nothing by his motion);—and the end of it was, that we had no more garden conferences; and I had to content myself with watching Fanny in silence, as she sat at work between supper and bedtime, or with the general conversation of my good friend, the farmer, which bore pretty much on crops of turnips and corn, on sheep and cattle and

artificial food, on grass lands, light land and heavy land, and so on; and of all which I was profoundly ignorant.

Then, instead of stopping up for an hour after supper, as she had done the first week or two after my arrival at the farm, Fanny was reminded by her aunt, in the pleasantest, kindest terms and tones imaginable, that it was time to go to bed, for she (Mrs. Blake) was sure that Fanny must be tired.

"Why, Jenny!" said the farmer, once or twice, "'tis *yarley* (early) yet. Don't send little Fanny away—such an old acquaintance of Roland's too; I reckon they like to see as much of one another as they can."

"You forget it is washing day to-morrow, William," said Mrs. Blake; "and Mrs. Suds is coming at four o'clock, and Fanny has to be up to get her her breakfast"—and so on.

It was not always washing day, of course; but it came to my remembrance afterwards, that Mrs. Blake had always some good reason to give why Fanny should't stay up long after supper.

At last I found out, by accident, what it was Mrs. Blake feared; and my heart and conscience told me she was right, and wise, and kind. For, what was I to Fanny, or Fanny to me? What could we be to each other? I shrank back appalled when I thought of it, and saw the true character of the bright light around which I had been fluttering. What had I to do with love—with pure and sacred love? I!—and I thought of my father, his criminal course, his

probable end—shame and ignominy!—of myself, such as I was, such as I was likely to be!

I met with a saying the other day, which will partly describe the feelings which agitated my mind when I made the discovery of which I have spoken: "*A wise man miserable, is more miserable than a fool miserable, because he understands his misery.*" Not that I then, or at any subsequent time, could have laid claim to the wisdom of the wise of this world; but surely there was a wisdom that had shone in, in some faint beams at least, upon my soul; and that wisdom, while it had humanized me and raised me in spirit above the low and degraded level of my worldly condition, showed me its misery and degradation. And with the nobler aspirations for this life, as well as for the life to come, which it had engendered, it showed me, too, the chains of earthly connections and public scorn and contempt which held me down. Happily, the wisdom which showed me my worldly misery reminded me too of a merciful and faithful One—the bearer of his children's griefs, the healer of their sorrows, the hearer and answerer of prayer. To him I fled, and, casting my burden upon him, he sustained me.

CHAPTER XLII.

A SCRAP OF A DIARY.

I AM a long way from Daffodil Farm. The stagecoach, on the back seat of which I am sitting, is taking me

into Yorkshire. I have said "good bye" to Fanny, probably never to see her again. The good farmer and his wife have been very kind to me; and so has Mr. Simmonds, the old clergyman, on whose recommendation I have obtained the situation to which I am going, as fast as four horses attached to a heavy stage-coach—such as were built and travelled the rough English roads at the beginning of this century—can carry me. It is a work of time, however; the journey will occupy three or four days, with occasional rests and frequent stoppages: plenty of time for me to think of the past, present, and future.

I have changed my attire: there is nothing of the sailor about me now. That character was involuntarily thrust upon me, and was cheerfully discarded: I had had enough of the sea. I am now in new plain clothes, provided for me by Mr. Simmonds; while the half-dozen stout shirts of Kent manufactured dowlas, and the home-knitted woollen stockings, which pretty well fill up the small travelling box now strapped on to the top of the coach, are the gift of Mrs. Blake. The Bible, which is carefully packed in between the shirts to save it from injury in travelling, was given me by my old Covent Garden friend the day before I left Daffodil Farm; and the hymn-book, round which is rolled a soft stocking, with the same careful intent as above, is Fanny Grey's last present.

I know very little where I am going, and nothing of the gentleman whom I shall have to call "master" except that he is brother of the Kentish clergyman:

not so old, however, by half a score years; and I am forewarned that he is in indifferent health, and of singularly reserved habits—that he is rich, but makes no show of his wealth—keeps a riding horse which he never rides, and a carriage in which he never drives. He has a large house, the greater part of which is shut up; keeps but three servants in the house, of whom I am to be one; another is an elderly woman, who acts in the double capacity of housekeeper and cook; and the third is a housemaid.

I have a card in my pocket-book—for I have bought a pocket-book in case I should need one; and that card has on it the following direction: “Lawrence Simmonds, Esquire, Templeton Lodge, near P——, Yorkshire.” That is where I am going; and the coach, I have been given to understand, passes by the gate of Templeton Lodge.

My fellow passengers are not very communicative. There are four. One is a stout farmer-like man, who is travelling only part of the journey down, and who sleeps great part of the way. He has a red face, heightening in colour to the very tip of his nose, which is very red indeed. He wakes every time the coach pulls up to change horses, and gets down, as he says, to stretch his legs. He stretches them from the coach to the bar of the inn, wherever it may be; and when he tumbles up again, he seems to breathe fire, and his cheeks and nose are redder than before. The next passenger is a poor woman. She seems comfortably wrapped up, but very sorrowful. She lives in London, but is going a good way down, she says, to see a dying

son who left London a few months ago in health, and was apprenticed in the country. She has heard bad news of him, and is afraid she shall not find him alive. Poor mother! Heaven comfort her, and help her! The other two are boys going to school, and answer in monosyllables when spoken to; so I have not only plenty of time for thinking, but not much to disturb my thoughts.

I think too much of Fanny Grey still, though I know she can be nothing to me but a pleasant memory. I almost wish my good friend Mr. Blake had not told me of his early struggles and of his early love, which, though true as steel, belied the old proverb by running smoothly on. He was as poor and friendless as I once, and he had, without rebuke, loved the child of his benefactress; and might I not take encouragement from his example? This thought *had* crossed my mind.

Ah, but William Blake, the destitute orphan boy, travelling to London with his sister to provide for and protect, and with only fourpence-halfpenny in his pocket at starting, had no taint of crime in his family to cover his face with shame, and to press with a dead weight on his heart. While I—oh! I felt as though the touch of my hand and the breath from my lips were profanation and disgrace—I, the son of such a father! I shuddered. It seemed almost as though I were doing wrong to mix with the virtuous and unblemished: but to have dreamt of linking my future life with—Enough; I had taken the alarm, or rather, like the foolish moth, I had been put away from

the snare, but not until my wings had been nearly scorched.

But why am I on my way to Yorkshire, when I had determined to cast myself once more into the whirlpool of London, where also my only hope of finding my dear old protectress, Mrs. Magrath, centred? Why, I am acting on the advice—not only the advice, but the earnest entreaties—of my kind friends whom I have left behind in Kent. I think they have perhaps magnified the danger I should incur of being seen and recognised by any of the people of Thieves' Castle, especially by the ruffian Kite or the not less ruffian Sloppy Stevens, whose threats I had reported to them. Fanny, with tears in her eyes, begged me not to venture myself in London; so did the motherly farmer's wife; so did the farmer himself; and Mr. Simmonds not only strongly dissuaded me from the hazardous experiment, but declared that my life was not safe in Kent and at such a short distance from London.

To be frank, I also shrank from the ordeal to which I should be again exposed. I had tasted the sweets and blessings of domestic life, and enjoyed its happy comforts. Could I return again with composure to my old haunts, old associations, old occupations?—to the stable-loft by night and the streets and markets by day? I thought not. True, I had not been altogether unhappy there in former times, and not so very long before; but I had gained fresh knowledge since then, and made new observations.

But if I did not return to London, how could I hope ever to find Mrs. Magrath?

"Think, my young friend," said Mr. Simmonds, when I put this question to him, "how many years have passed already since you so mournfully saw her last, and yet you have sought her. I honour your affection and gratitude; but you have yet to consider——It may well be," he added, interrupting himself, "that the poor woman is past the reach of human help and sympathy; if not, trust to Providence that, sooner or later, your desire may be gratified."

I do not know that this convinced, but it silenced me; and when I found that the kind old man had so far interested himself in my concerns, first, by satisfying himself of my truthfulness, and then procuring for me this situation, which would rescue me from the social degradation and contempt from which I had so long vainly attempted to extricate myself, it would have been folly and ingratitude not to accept his help.

I am on my road to Yorkshire, then, and Mr. Simmonds tells me that he will not lose sight of my future interests if, in this first step upwards, I prove myself worthy of confidence. I trust I am thankful; but the thought of my poor guilty father weighs down my spirits.

I am at Templeton Lodge. I have seen Mr. Simmonds, and he speaks kindly to me. He tells me that he knows all—has heard all about me from his brother; and he tells me also what my duties will be. They are not very heavy, I think; for I find—what I had not been told—that Mr. Simmonds has a gardener, who lives in a cottage hard by, and a groom

who has a room over the stables. I am, in fact, to be the personal attendant of the owner of Templeton Lodge.

I have said that Mr. Simmonds is in ill health. He is younger, but looks older than his brother in Kent. He tells me that he receives and pays but few visits; that he sometimes is driven out, not in his carriage, but in a small pony-chaise; and this is to be one part of my work: he seems a very timid old gentleman.

The house is much as it has been described to me, large and old-fashioned, with high pointed roofs and narrow casement windows. The front is covered with ivy, like an old ruin. It is not ruinous, however, though, as I have said, many of the rooms are shut up.

I am to enter upon my duties to-morrow.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MY HOME AT TEMPLETON LODGE.—I AM SUDDENLY
ALARMED.

I SHALL pass very rapidly over the events of several successive months. As my readers may suppose, the course of life on which I entered was very different from that which I had before known, and perhaps I missed the wild liberty which had been mixed up with my former social condition. But I had an ample compensation for this in the thought that I had emerged

at length from that condition, and was no longer a "City Arab." At first, indeed, I was awed by the reserve of my master, and fearful of giving offence or dissatisfaction by my inexperience. But the fear was needless, and the awe gradually passed away as I became familiar with his many excellencies. I learned something of his history too; and I found—it was almost a new discovery, this—that there are sorrows which accompany riches. But I am not at liberty, nor is it necessary, to enter into particulars here; I may say, however, that Mr. Simmonds had been in early life a happy husband and father. Templeton Lodge was not then almost shut up and deserted. But wife and children had passed away: one son only remained to comfort his age. That son was a manufacturer in another part of the broad county; he seldom visited Templeton Lodge, and then only to pass a few hours with his father. Nor were these transitory visits apparently productive of happiness. It seemed, indeed, as though the presence of the son recalled to the father's mind some poignant grief, or awakened recollections too tender to be encouraged, and yet they loved one another as parent and child perhaps too seldom love. I could not understand this mystery then, and I may not explain it now. Let me return to my own story.

The quiet occupations of a serving man gave me some leisure to resume the attempts at self-instruction I had elsewhere begun, and I found a kind helper and encourager in Mr. Simmonds. He said it amused him to teach a willing learner, and he taught me

much of which I had never dreamt before. He lent me books too, so that a new world was thus opened to me.

It was a calm and quiet, and not an unhappy life, that I led at Templeton Lodge. My master was indulgent, my fellow-servants were civil and obliging, and sometimes I heard from my dear friends at Daffodil Farm. But this was not often; for Mr. Blake was a better hand, as he said, with a spade than with a pen. I was informed, however, from time to time, that all was going on well, and that Fanny was well, and sent her——Then in one of the letters followed a great blotch of ink, with “respects” written over it in another hand. I suppose the farmer had written “love,” but somebody else had found fault with this expression, and altered it. And, notwithstanding my own magnanimous resolutions, I was foolish enough to feel this very keenly.

Occasionally, also, I received a message from the brother of my master, such as, “he was glad to hear favourable accounts of me, and that he had not forgotten his promise to keep an eye upon my interests.” All this seems very trivial to write, but there was so little incident to vary or ruffle the even current of my existence at Templeton Lodge, that what seems trivial now was important then. And thus two years of my life passed away.

“In e’en a’most every county and sheer in England, ma’am; here to-day and there to-morrow, ma’am; my poor old legs bean’t wore out yet, they bean’t; and I

must be upon the ramble. I couldn't live in a work'us, nohow."

These words fell upon my ear one day, as I was assisting the gardener in his work. A thick laurel hedge intervened between the garden and the yard, and, without being seen, I could observe the speaker, who was leaning on a staff, close to the outer gate of the yard, and in conversation with the housemaid.

I need not say how I was startled by the words I have repeated, nor why I anxiously kept myself in concealment, while I as anxiously watched the stranger. But he was no stranger to me, and my cheek flushed, I dare say, and with no pleasurable emotions, when I recognised in the old vagrant my Whiskers' Rents acquaintance, my fellow prisoner, and the deceitful old patterer who had lured me within the precincts of Thieves' Castle. He was more bent with age than when I last saw him, and his steps were more feeble and tottering; and it surprised me that, even with his vagabond habits, he had had either the will or the power to drag his limbs so far from his usual haunts. This was my first thought; my second was more perplexing,—what if I were the object of his journey? It did not seem so very unlikely that some intimation of my escape from the wreck might have reached my unhappy father in his stronghold, and that, moved by consideration for his own safety and that of his vile associates, or perhaps by a determination to entangle me once more in his meshes, he had employed this old man to find out my place of refuge; and as this

thought passed through my mind, I more closely concealed my person, and more carefully listened to his words.

"And what have you got to sell?" demanded the damsel, when the old man had come to a pause.

"Pins, needles, threads, laces, my dear; buttons and bodkins, hooks and eyes, and thimbles, and——"

"Oh, I don't want anything," said Susan, stopping the old man in his enumeration of his slender stock of haberdashery, which I now perceived he had slung in a basket by his side.

"Oh, don't say nay, charming Judy," quavered the old man, in a feeble attempt to carol the words of an old song which at that time was, or had lately been, popular in London and elsewhere. "May be, you'll buy a ballad of me, my dear?" he added; "here's lots on 'em; I used to sing 'em; but my bellows is too shakey now—wuss luck."

"No, no; go away, do; we don't want such rubbish," said Susan, as the old man began glibly to quote the titles of this part of his stock in trade. Nevertheless, she lingered; and the old man went on:—

"Here's dream books, my pretty lass, to put under yer piller, to make ye dream of yer true love——"

"Stuff!" said the girl.

I need not repeat, even if I could remember, all the blandishments used by the old pedlar in puffing off his goods; nor how the servant maid so far relaxed as to be persuaded to look over the contents of his basket. I only know that the conference seemed

intolerably long, before a bargain was struck for a little handful of his wares.

In the course of these negotiations, I noticed that the old man more than once shifted his position; and at last, pleading fatigue and thirst, he seated himself on a stone horseblock within the yard, and entreated the girl to give him a draught of water or small beer; "anything," he said, "to wet his whistle." And when Susan disappeared for a moment on the benevolent errand, I could see that my old acquaintance looked sharply though furtively and pryingly round, and glanced quickly at the range of kitchen offices by which he was partially surrounded. I thought little of this at the time, only that I supposed he was on the look-out for anything that was neither too hot nor too heavy for him to purloin and carry off unperceived; and I was glad when the damsel returned before my old ready-fingered acquaintance had had time or opportunity to indulge in his livelong habit of "picking and stealing."

"Here's luck to ye," said the old man, lifting the mug to his lips, and draining it to the bottom. "You've got a nice place of it here, my dear."

"Oh, the place is well enough," said she; "not too much to do, nor too many to do it."

"A rich man, I reckon, the master: what did you say his name is, my pretty one?" said the insinuating old vagrant.

"I didn't say his name was anything in particular," said the girl; "but my master's name is Mr. Simmonds; and he is rich enough, I dare say; but he doesn't make much show of it."

"Ha ! keeps his money safe locked up, does he ?"

"I reckon so," said the girl ; "but that's no business of mine, nor yours either, is it ?"

"Oh dear no, not the least in the world," said the old man, carelessly. "I suppose now you couldn't——"

What he supposed my fellow-servant could not do or say, neither she nor I was doomed to hear ; for at that moment the shrill voice of the housekeeper was heard calling loudly from the kitchen, reproving Susan for idling her time, and bidding the old man go about his business. Now, the voice of Mrs. Latham, the housekeeper, was a voice potential, and not to be disregarded. Accordingly, Susan scuttled away ; and the old man, after again keenly glancing around, slung his basket over his shoulder, and hobbled off, to the melody of his own cracked voice, singing, or attempting to sing, another of the popular songs of that period.

I need not say that I felt relieved when the old ballad-singer had disappeared, though I was still in doubt whether his pedlarship was not a deception to cover some iniquitous design ; and I could not feel secure that I was not the primary object of his visit. More troubled, perhaps, than I should have cared to acknowledge, I resumed my gardening occupation, until, having worked myself into a pleasant perspiration, I began to smile at my fears. For I remembered that this poor, wicked, but weak old man had been a wanderer through a long life of alternate wretchedness and self-indulgence, of petty crime and appropriate

punishment. It had been his boast, years ago, that he knew every nook and corner of England. I had heard him say that he should go on tramping through the country till he most likely would lay himself down to die under a hedge. And what, therefore, more likely than that, without any definite design, he should once more have set out on a long and toilsome tour—the ruling passion strong in extreme age, without any more definite design than that of indulging his vagrant disposition? And as to the distance from London into Yorkshire, why, he might have been a month, or two months, or three, upon the road.

And then, if my existence in England had been suspected at Thieves' Castle, and it were thought necessary for the safety of that criminal community to carry out the threat of the ruffian Kite, they would scarcely have employed a feeble and laggard old man like this "Pinetar," as he was called there, as a spy. My fears, therefore, naturally as they had been raised, rapidly faded away; and when two or three months elapsed, and I saw no more of the old man, and heard nothing to disturb my security, I had almost forgotten the sudden alarm I had experienced.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TEMPLETON LODGE IN FEAR.

"FIFTY POUNDS REWARD. Whereas on the night of the —th of November last"—and then the handbill

went on to recount how a farmhouse, some twenty miles distant from Templeton Lodge, had been broken into and robbed, the inmates having been barbarously treated by the burglars, some five or six in number; in consequence of which a reward of fifty pounds would be given for the discovery and conviction of the offenders, or any of them.

This handbill, which fell into the hands of Mr. Simmonds's groom, and was transferred by him to our kitchen table, was the first intimation received in our secluded household, that a desperate gang of house-breakers had invaded the outlying rural districts of the broad county. It was not the last, however. Throughout the ensuing winter—it was the winter after the alarm I experienced from the sudden appearance of my old Whiskers' Rents and prison acquaintance—rumours reached us from time to time of similar outrages in different directions, but all at some little distance from Templeton Lodge. Now, it was a lonely farmhouse which was attacked; then, a gentleman's seat in another part of the country, some thirty miles off, the owner and many of his servants being absent; again, the shop and dwelling-house of one of the principal tradesmen in a considerable market town, many miles from either of the former scenes of violence, was ransacked; and before the consternation which these events caused had subsided, another source of alarm arose from the fact that highway robberies were committed on many of the public roads, attended with such circumstances of daring determination as proved that the perpetrators, whoever they might be, were not only expert and

practised in crime, but were formidable in number and resources.

For it required no great penetration to conjecture that the principal actors in these and many similar scenes of violence were banded together. Where numbers were required to overpower resistance and ensure success, numbers were engaged in the unlawful deeds; and where, on the other hand, the victims were feeble and timid, one or two only of the robbers appeared in the business. But in all the cases of house-breaking, one powerful and brutal man, as far as could be gathered from the hurried observation and after description of the plundered and ill-used inhabitants, was invariably present. His countenance, it is true, was covered with a mask of crape, as were the faces of all the robbers; but the threats of fearful vengeance uttered by the leader in these outrages, and the plans he adopted for silencing and securing his victims, so as to prevent immediate alarm and pursuit, were in every case so similar, that identity was almost established. On the other hand, this burglar never appeared as a highwayman or footpad: these acts of crime were principally committed by an evidently young and athletic man, who in the exercise of his profession condescended sometimes to playful levity, though couched in vulgar language, in dealing with those whom he called his customers and clients.

Perhaps I owe an apology to my readers for giving even these brief outlines of occurrences which spread serious alarm at that time through the neighbourhood, for many miles round Templeton Lodge. It will be

seen presently, however, that they have a considerable bearing on my personal history ; and I must yet add another circumstance or two.

One of these was, that the offer of rewards for the discovery and conviction of the ruffians seemed utterly ineffectual, not only with regard to the end designed, but even in checking the misdeeds. Perhaps this is not so much to be wondered at when the unsatisfactory state of the country police of that day is borne in mind ; especially when it is remembered that even now, in spite of an improved system and greater vigilance, some painful instances of atrocious crime have been committed with apparent impunity, so as, at least, to baffle all the skill of men trained to the pursuit of the guilty.

To be sure, a few arrests were made, and some suspected persons were examined by country magistrates ; but as they were able to give a reasonable account of themselves, and their identity with either of the miscreants could not be established, they were necessarily discharged.

Another circumstance connected with these events was, that competent judges declared, without hesitation, that the burglars must be practised London hands. For there was then, as I believe there is now, a superior execution and finish—if the expression may be allowed—in metropolitan crime, rarely attained by mere country practitioners. In this case, the skill, foresight, and arrangement evidently exercised in these robberies, bore all the marks of superior London training. This, at least, was the deliberate and firm

belief of an experienced thief-taker, who was employed in the vain pursuit and detection of the criminals.

And this it was that set my thoughts wandering to Thieves' Castle. My readers will remember the brief description I gave, some chapters back, of that den of infamy, and the correspondence maintained there with housebreakers and highway robbers in different parts of the country; and I could not conceal from myself the great probability that my unhappy father was concerned in the affairs I have just described. The description given, too, of the principal burglar tallied well enough with my remembrance of the ruffian Kite; and, added to this, was the previous appearance of the old ballad-singer in our part of the country. It seemed all plain to me now. The regularly organized community of evil-doers had fixed on this distant spot for their winter campaign; had commissioned the wretched old man to obtain needful information of available points of attack—an office for which, alas! he was too well fitted by long habit and inclination; had probably furnished for him means of more expeditious transport from and to head-quarters than his own bodily powers could have furnished; and had taken care to provide such retreats for themselves, with other appliances for baffling the pursuit of justice, as long experience would suggest. Looking at it thus, it was no longer a mystery to me that the nefarious plans of the housebreakers had been thus far successful.

I need not describe the agony these thoughts produced in my mind, and the attempts I made to escape

from their obvious conclusions. Oh, what would I not have given, if the most costly gifts had been at my disposal, to have been assured that I wronged my unhappy parent by these suspicions! And how mournfully did I regret that my father had ever sought, and made himself known to me! An orphan condition would have been comparative bliss! I was worse than orphaned.

"You have done right to tell me of these suspicions of yours, Roland," said Mr. Simmonds, when I spoke to him on the subject; "and it seems likely enough that they are well founded. And you think that we have to expect a visit from these people before they leave this part of the country?"

"I am afraid we must, sir," said I, remembering the inquisitive glances cast by the old spy over the assailable parts of the house, and knowing that he had ample means of finding out the weakness of our garrison.

"I think so too," said Mr. Simmonds, pale and trembling with apprehension (I have intimated that he was both timid and hypochondriac); "and I don't know what I had better do."

"Would it not be well to let the groom and gardener sleep in the house?" I suggested; "and if you would not mind the expense, sir, it might be prudent to employ a night-watchman for a few weeks, till these alarms have passed away."

"No, no!" exclaimed my master vehemently, "I will not have men in my house; they are not to be

trusted, Roland. You are the only one I can trust, and I won't have anybody else about me."

I expected this; for it was one of my poor master's fancies that every person he employed had base designs on, not only his property, but his life; and it seems as strange to me now as it did then, that he had made a solitary exception in my favour; and I could see that even my proposal, natural as it was, excited for a moment his jealous suspicious of my good faith.*

"No, no," he repeated, more calmly, "I think that you and I should be a match for the villains, if they come; and 'open enemies are better than false friends,' eh, Roland?"

I would do what I could, I said; but if the men were the gang I supposed them to be—and, indeed, judging by what they already had done, whoever they might be—they were very desperate villains indeed. And would it not be well to write to Mr. Richard (my employer's son), and ask him——

"You don't know what you are talking about, Roland," said Mr. Simmonds, hastily, and relapsing

* I have not cared to dwell upon the eccentricities of my kind employer: and I will not do so now. But some of my readers may remember a somewhat similar instance of mental hallucination, in the case of the Rev. Mr. H—, who, though possessed of large property, and living in a large mansion, could not be prevailed on to keep more than one servant of either sex; and who was so painfully suspicious even of them, that he securely locked them up every night, lest they should be tempted to rob him, and perhaps murder him for the sake of his wealth.

"He lost his life," says his biographer, "in the following extraordinary manner. Going one morning to let out his servants," who, according to the narrative, must have slept in a detached building, his dog fawned upon him suddenly, and threw him into a pond. The servants heard him call for assistance; but, being locked up, they could not help their master, and he was accordingly drowned."

into his previous nervous excitement. "Do you think I would expose my dear boy to such danger as you seem to fear? No, no; we will be a match for them: you are not afraid, are you?" he demanded, speaking more harshly than he had ever before spoken to me.

It was impossible to move Mr. Simmonds from his determination; and thus, with no human protection against the designs of wicked men, our small household separated and retired night after night—thankful every succeeding morning for another day's reprieve from the fears which had haunted our very dreams.

Meanwhile, however, tidings of the outrages I have described reached the ears of Mr. Richard; and it was some relief to me, at least, when he unexpectedly made his appearance, accompanied by a servant, and declared his intention to remain at Templeton Lodge for the protection of his aged father, until the cause for alarm had been removed.

CHAPTER XLV.

SLOPPY STEVENS MAKES HIS LAST APPEARANCE—
IGNOMINIOUSLY.

THAT same night I was aroused from the first refreshing sleep I had had for many preceding ones, by the violent ringing of an alarm-bell, the cord of which I knew to be in the chamber of my master; and by tumultuous sounds from the lower part of the house,

closely followed by the shrieks of the two female servants, who, like me, had been thus suddenly awakened.

It was past midnight, dark and stormy. Wind howled in and around the chimneys, and heavy rain rattled against the casements of the old mansion; but above this peaceful din I could distinguish voices.

I sprang from my bed bewildered. In another moment I had hastily cast on some of my garments, and was groping my way down the dark staircase. At the first landing place I nearly stumbled over a man, who was crouching, as it seemed, against the wall.

"Is it you, Leigh?" gasped he. It was Mr. Richard's servant, who, the previous evening, had been rather loud in his boastings of what he would do if the house were attacked.

"Yes. What is the matter? What do these noises mean?"

"They have got in; and they are mur—mur—— don't go away from me: if you go down, you'll be mur—murdered too," he cried, trembling violently, and clinging to me: but I broke from his grasp.

The noise appeared to come from Mr. Simmond's chamber; and as I hastened toward it, it became more loud and distinct. I could now not only distinguish voices, but I knew them; and I know not now whether my blood more curdled with fear, or boiled with indignation: they were the voices of Kite and Sloppy Stevens, raised in threats of fearful import. There were other voices, too—those of my poor

master, entreating for forbearance and mercy, and of his son, shouting for assistance. Then there was a scuffle; and, before I could reach the spot, the sound of a pistol.

I rushed forward. I claim no credit for extreme courage: nine men out of ten would probably have done precisely as I did. Besides, I had not been so delicately nurtured as to think much of bodily injury. I rushed forward, then, and sprang into the chamber.

A night lamp was burning on a bracket, and a fire, which I had made up three hours before, was yet blazing in the grate; and by this light a scene presented itself which my memory still vividly retains.

Struggling desperately in the grasp of two men, disguised in crape masks, was the son of my employer. They had dragged him to the floor; and the pistol which he had fired in self-defence, but without effect, had been wrested from his hand, and was now being turned as a murderous weapon of offence against him, by the strong arm of one of the robbers.

Another and yet more helpless conflict had, as it seemed, already terminated; for the aged owner of the mansion lay stretched on the floor apparently senseless, and disregarded by two other wretches, who were already silently but expeditiously proceeding with their work of pillage. A small bureau had been forced open, and the clink of money told that they were thus far successful in their criminal enterprise.

It was only in a rapid and momentary glance, however, that these particulars were impressed on my senses; for as I instinctively rushed forward and

arrested a blow which would probably have added murder to robbery, a cry, which I knew to be that of the ruffian Kite, rang through the chamber.

"'Tis young Roland Leigh, riz from the dead!" he shouted, with a fearful cry; and, the next moment, every veiled face was turned towards me, while their owners fell back with obvious terror from my unexpected apparition.

The panic was complete and decisive. The hardened villains, who would not have scrupled at committing murder rather than be defeated in their unlawful object, and whose brute courage had carried them through many scenes of desperate resistance and real bodily peril, were not proof against superstition. As it afterwards proved, my face was familiar to them all, for they had known me in my involuntary sojourn at Thieves' Castle, where it was firmly believed that I had perished in the wreck of the "General Washington"; and my sudden appearance among them, while thus engaged in their dark deed of violence, struck them, one and all, with deadly fear. For an instant only they staggered and attempted to rally; and then, overpowered by their superstitious dread of contact with a spirit, as they afterwards confessed, they turned and fled.

Meanwhile, my master's son had risen to his feet; and, though unable to comprehend the moving cause of this sudden flight, he was sufficiently collected to take advantage of the obvious terror which had fallen upon the robbers. And in our pursuit of them we were joined by his servant, who had, partially at least,

shaken off his temporary cowardice, and regained some presence of mind. I shall not further attempt to describe the particulars of that stormy and perilous night: let it suffice to say that, after a renewed and desperate struggle, two of the miscreants were disabled and captured before they had reached the window through which they had effected an entrance; and the other two, though they managed to escape, were hotly pursued by the groom, who had been aroused by our shouts, and by Mr. Richard himself, and gave themselves up as prisoners. As I have already intimated, one of the burglars was my old Whiskers' Rents acquaintance, Sloppy Stevens, and another the ruffian Kite, of Thieves' Castle.

I shall spare my readers the report of a criminal prosecution and trial; for though my history has necessarily led me to a record of crime, I would not that it should catch the features of a Newgate Calendar. I will briefly say, therefore, that the unhappy men were, after several weeks' imprisonment, placed at the bar of justice for attempted burglary. Two words will tell the result—"GUILTY," "DEATH." And thus, though hand had joined in hand, the wicked did not go unpunished.

They did not suffer the full penalty of the law, however. Perhaps they owed this exercise of mercy to the earnest prayers and strong influence of their prosecutor; but it may be that they purchased it by treachery to former companions in crime, and unwilling service to the state. I know only this—that,

following hard upon their trial, a sudden enlightenment fell upon the police of that day, respecting a notorious haunt of thieves and coiners, in an old house on the banks of the Thames, very near to London, and that a strong detachment of constables forced an entrance. They found the nest, and many undeniable and unequivocal proofs of the criminal character of its inmates, but the birds were flown.

Then were scattered over the country offers of rewards for the capture of certain individuals who had rendered themselves obnoxious to justice. Conspicuously among these was one—Captain Leigh. His person was described with minute fidelity, and his usual haunts were expressly indicated.

But these offers produced no response. Months passed away, and no further discoveries were made.

Meanwhile, the small establishment at Templeton Lodge was broken up. Indeed, Mr. Simmonds never returned to his home after the trial of the burglars; for his health gave way beneath the excitement to which he had been exposed, and, with his health of body, his mind sunk into confirmed imbecility. I will not dwell upon this: it is enough to say that my poor master—after a few months of harmless and not entirely unhappy lunacy—died in the arms of his son, and under his roof.

CHAPTER XLVI.

I RECEIVE A VISIT FROM MY FATHER.

How, when Mr. Lawrence Simmonds died, I was retained by his son, and employed by him in his factory; how he kindly, while knowing my previous history, advanced me, step by step, until I had attained a position of trust; and how I found that the education I had contrived to pick up, while only a "City Arab," became increasingly valuable to me—these things I shall not set down in detail. It is sufficient to say that, some two years after the events recorded in the last chapter, I was a clerk in the counting house of Mr. Richard Simmonds, and had lodgings in a neat little cottage, not far from the factory, my landlady being an elderly widow, very neat and very deaf.

One winter's evening, about this time, I was returning from my daily employment, and had nearly reached my comfortable home, when I was accosted by name by a man, who, in north-country dialect, asked permission to accompany me to my lodgings, saying that he had important business to communicate. There was nothing in his manner to excite alarm, or even suspicion. As far as I could judge by the imperfect light of an oil-lamp close by, he was a stout, elderly, respectable farmer; and though I was at a loss to conceive the nature of his communications, I had no hesitation in acceding to his request, and in a few

minutes we were in the little sitting room which I was permitted to call my own, and which was cheerfully lighted up by a blazing fire and a candle.

"You do not know me?" said he, in the same broad speech, as he seated himself, and, as it seemed, invited my scrutiny.

Certainly not. I had not the most distant remembrance of having seen my visitor before, and I said so. My connections and intimacies had not much lain among farmers, save my good friend at Daffodil Farm, in Kent, with whom I still kept up an occasional correspondence, and for whose sake I was disposed to give the right hand of fellowship to any agricultural stranger. And I could scarcely be deceived in setting down my visitor as a tolerably flourishing member of that community. I could not see his hands, for the thick gloves he wore, and his face was partially concealed by a red woollen comforter; but his entire appearance and manners tallied with what I had seen of Yorkshire farmerhood.

"The old woman," said he, after a moment's pause, "be there nubbot in t' house but she?"

"Nobody but her, besides our two selves," I said; "and if you have anything to say privately, you need not fear being overheard. The old lady is very deaf."

"For all that," rejoined my strange visitor, in a tone of voice and in a manner so altered that I started with sudden surprise, "for all that I shall take the liberty, Mr. Leigh, of securing ourselves against intrusion;" and, adapting the deed to the word, he rose quickly and turned the key of the door. "We are all right

now," he continued, trying the lock, and finding it fast; and then he again deliberately seated himself.

I cannot say that I felt no alarm, but a feeling stronger than that of mere apprehension had arisen in my mind, which overmastered it, and subdued me into silent acquiescence with the action I have described.

"Who are you, and what is your business with me?" I asked, after a moment's painful silence.

My visitor made me no verbal answer, but first throwing off his gloves and comforter and thick Witney coat, and then gradually divesting himself of one external disguise after another, till my little table was furnished with a toilet of false eyebrows, false whiskers, an exceedingly natural-looking wig, and other minute personal appliances—my father stood revealed to me as I had last seen him at Thieves' Castle, under the title of "the Captain."

"You know me now," said he, quietly, and in his natural voice.

"Yes, I know you now," I responded in his own words, faintly; for I was overcome with terror.

"You need not be afraid," he said, somewhat contemptuously "If I had the power, I have not the disposition—at least, I have not the intention—to do you any injury."

"Why have you sought me?" I asked.

"Because I wished to satisfy myself, with my own eyes, that you are alive, when I had reason to think you were lost in the shipwreck, and because I am about to leave the country, probably never to return," he said; "and whatever you may think of my past



A VISIT FROM MY FATHER

conduct towards you, I would not go away without a last interview with my own and only son. You do not doubt our relationship, I suppose?" he added.

I had no reason to question it, and I said so.

"You need not," he went on, "for there can be no doubt of it: the proofs are abundantly satisfactory; but I have not sought you out to establish them. If it is any consolation to you to disbelieve or to disclaim the connection, you can do so."

I could neither disbelieve or disclaim, I said: but, oh that he had never troubled himself about me, and left me in ignorance that I had a father!

It would have been better for him if he had, he said; for if he had never known me, he should not have been ruined as he now was. However, he did not wish to reproach me. After all, he added, it was the cowardice and treachery of his subordinate agents, rather than anything I had done, which had broken up his company, and reduced him to a life of shifts and evasions and concealments, to escape the doom which hung over him.

There was a sort of melancholy sadness in his tone, which touched and moved me far more than any amount of violent blustering or threatening would have done, and which urged me to break through the dread with which he had inspired me, while I earnestly besought him to reflect that the condition of which he complained was the consequence of his own departure from integrity and uprightness; that, according to his own showing, he had placed himself in opposition to both Divine and human laws, and ought

not to wonder that he at last had found them to be more powerful than himself.

He heard me patiently, and smiled—his strange, cold, and unfeeling smile. “You think,” he said, “that they are more powerful, then? Are you sure of that? Look at me; here I am, still at liberty, unshackled, unfettered, when, according to your idea of retribution, I ought to be and should be in prison, perhaps in a condemned cell, and when, as I dare say you know, I am worth a hundred pounds to any who will take me alive. Pshaw! it is human law that has failed, not I.”

“Alas! you say this, and to-morrow, this very night perhaps, may see you deprived of your boasted liberty.”

“That is to say, you could betray me. But I know that you will not; *you* know that you will not. And if you should make the attempt, are you sure that you would succeed? Here we are, hand to hand; I am stronger than you, and I am armed, which you are not. Should you leave the room on any pretext, I could leave it also, and before you could summon assistance, I should have disappeared. So you see,” he added, coolly, “I am in no danger from you.”

For some moments we sat in rigid and, to me, painful silence. I was unspeakably distressed. He appeared to know or to guess what was passing in my mind, and he fixed his eyes upon me with that strange, piercing, and fascinating look of which I have elsewhere spoken.

“Will it be any satisfaction to you, Roland,” he

said, presently relapsing into his calm, quiet way of speaking, "if I tell you that I am weary of the life I have lately led—a life of continual alarm and danger; that I have more than once been on the point of giving myself up, and so ending it; that I am determined to try, in another land, whether there is not some truth, after all, in the old proverb about 'Honesty being the best Policy'; that my passage is already taken, and the passage money paid down; that I have travelled all this distance from —— (he named the port) to see you once more, and for the last time; and that a week hence I shall have left England, probably for ever?"

A satisfaction! a relief! yes, a blessed one! It is strange, perhaps, that I should have placed implicit faith in these declarations; but I did, and a weight was lifted from my mind.

We resumed our conference; but I need not repeat all that passed. In a few words, he told me how he had escaped from the search made for him, by having received early intelligence of the treachery, as he called it, of the convicted burglars; but of his after contrivances he said nothing, nor was I solicitous to learn how he had for so long a time evaded recognition, and obtained subsistence, in spite of the vigilance of the police and the offers of blood-money for his capture. But let me not forget that he solemnly declared, with every appearance of sincerity, that the knowledge of my rescue from death overweighed the bitterness he felt when he thought of the dangers to which he had been exposed, and the sufferings he had

endured in escaping from the snares which had been laid for him. It seemed, indeed, as though a strange tenderness towards myself were mingled with the harder traits of his character, showing that paternal sympathies were not entirely extinguished in his breast.

He spoke, too, of the future, and of his newly formed determination to try what honesty would do for him; but it was with no hopeful ardour; and his whole bearing, though he endeavoured to conceal it, was that of a man worn down by anxious care, dispirited, and desolate.

Did I not endeavour at this critical juncture, it may be asked, to direct the thoughts of my unhappy father to the warnings, and threatenings, and promises of the gospel—yes, promises even to such as he? Did I not remind him of the terrors of a broken law? of the never-sleeping eye of Divine Justice? and of the declaration of God himself, that every transgression of man should meet, in another world, its appropriate doom? Did I not urge upon him the merciful proclamations of Jehovah, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon?” Yes, all this I said, and more than I can now repeat; and he listened to me patiently at first, but with that cold and sarcastic smile of his.

“You do not know what I am, or what I have been,” he said, when I paused; “or you would not speak to me thus. Enough,” he added, angrily and peremptorily, when I would have renewed my en-

treaties and prayers; "there is nothing you can say that I have not heard before, and I have not time now to listen. I know what you would say," he continued, still more impatiently and fiercely; "you would tell me that I must repent and believe. I tell you that I neither repent nor believe."

And yet, while he said this, his lip quivered, and his breast heaved with apparent excitement. And so afterwards, when, with assumed levity, he asserted that, whatever sins he had committed against society, he had but carried out the principles by which every man in society was actuated—that of preying upon the weak and defenceless by the exercise of superior strength, and upon the strong by deeper cunning; yet did he express gladness that I had not given way to his temptations, nor succumbed to his threats; and that my present prosperity was unstained and untainted with "what society called crime."

It was useless to attempt to argue, for my unhappy father had sophistry for every argument. It seemed equally vain to appeal to his conscience, for conscience appeared to be dead within him. I ventured, at length, to speak of my mother and her wrongs. For a moment he was touched, but the transient feeling soon passed away.

"And yet," I said, "you retain her portrait."

"I do," he said; "I have it with me now."

"You showed it to me once; will you permit me to see it again?"

He drew it from his bosom, and put it into my hands. "If you value it," he said, "keep it."

It was almost the only gift I would have received from his hands, but I received that with thankfulness; he interrupted my agitated acknowledgments: "You need not think so much about it," he said; "if I valued it very much, perhaps I should not part with it."

"Had you never any affection for my mother?" I exclaimed, somewhat indignant at the apparent contempt he cast upon her memory.

"I suppose not," said he, coolly, "that is, not what you would call affection; but we have said enough about this. Some day," he added, after some moments' silence, "when I am safely off, and have nothing better to do, I will send you a sketch of some parts of my life; and then, perhaps, you will understand me better than you can do now."

I thanked him; and once more I entreated him to forget for a moment what his past life had been, or rather, to let the remembrance of it drive him, not to dogged sullen hardness and impenitence, but to the outstretched arms of His mercy who is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

I might, to all outward appearance, have spoken to a rock as effectively as I spoke to that insensible man; and I groaned in spirit at the fruitlessness of my efforts to touch his heart.

And thus two, three, perhaps four hours passed away. Presently my landlady retired to her chamber; and then I got food and placed it before my father. He ate, for he had long fasted. I offered him money; but he would receive none from me. He was not so destitute as I might suppose, he said; and had he

not told me that his passage money was paid? No, he would not take money from me: hawks did not prey on their own brood; and he would not rob his son.

And thus we parted. In the dead of night, my poor father, his disguise resumed, stole from my lodgings; and I passed the remainder of the night, till dawn of day, in an agony of shame and grief.

For many days and weeks afterwards, I nervously and tremblingly examined the police reports of every paper I could lay my hands on, to ascertain whether, at the last moment, the unhappy criminal's plans of escape had been thwarted. But no intelligence reached me from that source; and after a time, except that the name of my father was more fervently and perpetually mingled with my secret prayers, the remembrance of that night seemed to me like the unreal phantasy of a dream, rather than the memory of an event which had actually occurred in my experience.

CHAPTER XLVII.

I AM IN LONDON AGAIN; AND, IN SEARCH OF PEGGY MAGRATH, ONCE MORE FIND MY WAY TO WHISKERS' RENTS.

ANOTHER year passed away, and I was once more treading the pavements of London; not as a City Arab, ragged, friendless, and despised, but in good broad cloth, "close buttoned to the chin," and with

many to shake hands with me now, who, a few years before, would probably have shrunk from my touch. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself," said the psalmist, with a keen insight into poor human nature; and I had, at least, some signs of well-doing about me; for I had taken another step or two in advance, and was the accredited and confidential agent of my employer, the Yorkshire manufacturer.

No fear, now, of being driven away from church-doors by suspicious and officious beadles, as a "wagabond"; no danger of being sent to prison for having had more money in my possession than my looks would warrant; no occasion to appeal—if appeal had been necessary—to Ben the ostler for a character. All this was changed; but how?

I asked myself this question when, one day, I found myself in Smithfield, and looked round on the crowds there. There they were—drovers, salesmen, jockeys, buyers, sellers, as I had known them only a few years before; there were the same pens, where, shivering with cold, I had tended sheep; there was the place—I well remembered it—on which my father stood when he first recognised me; and here the spot where I was thrown from the horse, and taken up insensible. Around me, too, were ragged urchins, striving to pick up pence, honestly if they could, and some of them I fear, dishonestly, if the chance were thrown in their way; and no one seeming to care for them, as no one, in former times, had seemed to care for me. But I had been cared for, nevertheless; and did not God care for them also? Another day will declare it.

But how had the change in myself been brought about? And when I asked myself this question, I thought of my old friend in Covent Garden market, and his emphatic declaration, that "industry, honesty, and God's blessing" were the elements of success in life; and I blessed the day when that first lesson of honesty was practically and painfully impressed on my mind by poor Peggy Magrath: more fervently still, and with deeper gratitude, I remembered the day when in my prison cell light broke into my soul, and those first imperfect petitions of mine reached the ear of Eternal Mercy: that day on which I had looked up to the great God as my father, and asked him to be the guide of my youth.

My business engagements were sufficiently important; but they did not so entirely engross my whole time that I could not spare an hour for my own private affairs; and one day I bent my steps to Whiskers' Rents. For, in all this time, my unsatisfied craving desire to find the poor lost protectress of my childhood had become stronger than ever; and I had even inserted advertisements in several London papers, offering a reward for any intelligence that could be given respecting "an elderly Irishwoman, named Peggy Magrath, who, in such a year, had lodgings at Whiskers' Rents," etc. But no response to that offer ever reached me. Not entirely disheartened by this failure, however, I determined again to explore our old quarters.

There was no change for the better. The houses,

indeed, looked more ruinous; and the heaps of festering corruption which encumbered the roadway, and spread their filthy effluvia around, seemed larger and more offensive than ever. There was the same gin-shop at the corner, and the same receptacle for marine stores; the same little shop for cheap chandlery, and the same lodging-houses for tramps and beggars and London disrespectability: the only change appeared to be in the inhabitants, very few of whom I was able to recognise, though it swarmed with life like a human hive, yet not like a hive of industry. There were there now, as there ever had been since Whiskers' Rents was Whiskers' Rents, more drones than workers.

The fever which had, a few years before, more than decimated its inhabitants, and scattered the population in terror, had run its course, and then—its strength for the time exhausted—had appeared to die away; and the place of the dead and the fugitive had been speedily filled up by the living, who, in their turn, like their predecessors, took to nursing the lurking pestilence as though it had been some pet monster. For it was not gone: it lay hidden in neglected sewers of stagnant filth, in heaps of garbage, in rotten floors and damp, musty, fusty cellars, in rags and poverty, and in intemperance and every other vice; it lay in the muddy streets amidst animal and vegetable putridity, corruption, and decay, to be trodden underfoot, patiently biding its time to spring up again in terrible vengeance; it floated unseen and unfelt in the thick murky atmosphere, and its invisible atoms took shelter in human lungs, and throats, and mouths, and mixed

its subtle poison with every drop of vital blood in Whiskers' Rents; it nestled amidst the heaps of bones and cast-off garments, the uncured rabbit-skins and cat-skins, in Solomon Stevens's multifarious stores; and it gained strength every day and every hour from the fumes of that flaunting gin-palace, whose owner, enriched by the folly and guilt of his neighbours, and having regard to his own safety, lived miles away, in his own country cottage (a cottage *ornée*), and drank only pure water. Yes, doubt not that the fever was there in hiding: it has slain its thousands, and its tens of thousands, since then, in Whiskers' Rents, and such places as Whiskers' Rents, with periodical regularity; and when churchyards and graveyards swell and fatten with their fever-slain victims, the alarm is taken, and everybody says that "something must be done." But when the foul pestilence has run its course, the alarm subsides, and the thing that must be done, and should be done, is left undone.*

* Since writing the above, I have seen a report presented and read, in the year 1857, to a London audience, by Dr. Letheby, the Medical Officer of Health; and which may well have a painful interest to every City Arab, while it will illustrate and confirm what I have here and elsewhere in my story ventured to expose. At present, however, I give only a short extract. After speaking of scenes of wretchedness, vice, disease, and poverty, too gross and repulsive to be transferred to these pages, in localities of which Whiskers' Rents, as I have described it, is but a feeble and imperfect type, the Doctor goes on to say:—

"In the ward of Bishopsgate, a little above Houndsditch, there is a narrow passage, called Rose Alley, which leads from the main thoroughfare into New Street. This alley contains a row of twelve houses, which are in a shockingly dirty and ruinous condition. Each house contains from six to seven rooms, which are inhabited by the very poorest of the poor Irish. In all there are seventy-seven rooms, and of these there are seventy-six tenanted by sixty-three families, of two hundred and fifty-two persons. Eight of the rooms are occupied by ten men, seventeen women, and twelve

But there was no fever at Whiskers' Rents, visible and palpable, at the time of this my visit: it was winter; and fever—like my old acquaintances, the travelling tinkers, tramping beggars, rag collectors, wandering minstrels, Punch and Judy showmen, and so forth—kept snug and close in its winter's quarters, ready for next summer's work; but held in present check by frost and snow and bitter north-east winds.

Such a wind, in spite of coat and wrapper, caused

children. In one room there are two men, three women, and five children; and in another, one man, four women, and two children; and, when, a fortnight ago, I visited the back room on the ground floor of No. 5, I found it occupied by a man, two women, and two children; and in it was the dead body of a poor girl who had died a few days before. The body was stretched out on the bare floor, without shroud or coffin. There it lay, in the midst of the living; and we may well ask how it can be other wise than that the human heart should be deadened to all the gentler feelings of our nature, when such sights as these are of common occurrence?

"These rooms are let at from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 9d. per week, and they are wretchedly dirty and miserably furnished; in fact, they are infested with that peculiarly fusty and sickening smell which is characteristic of the filthy haunts of poverty. *There also lurk the germs of disease, which wait only for one last condition to bring them into frightful activity.* In such a polluted atmosphere, it is not surprising that epidemics and other infectious diseases should often get the mastery of medical skill, and almost decimate the population. So close and unwholesome is the atmosphere of some of the rooms, that I have endeavoured to ascertain, by chemical means, whether it does not contain some peculiar product of decomposition that gives to it its foul odour, and its rare powers of engendering disease. I find that it is not only deficient in the due proportion of oxygen, but it contains three times the usual amount of carbonic acid, besides a quantity of aqueous vapour, charged with alkaline matter that stinks abominably. This is doubtless the product of putrefaction, and of the various fetid and stagnant exhalations that pollute the air of the place. In many of my former reports, and in those of my predecessor, your attention has been drawn to this pestilential source of disease, and to the consequences of heaping human beings into such contracted localities; and I again revert to it, because of its great importance, not merely that it perpetuates fever and the allied disorders, but because there stalks side by side with this pestilence a yet deadlier presence, blighting the moral existence of a rising population, rendering their hearts hopeless, their acts ruffianly, and scattering, while society averts her eye, the retributive seeds of increase for crime, turbulence, and pauperism."

my teeth to chatter as I turned in and out, and threaded my way through a labyrinth of lanes, alleys, and courts until I arrived at the stronghold itself, of which I have been writing. It was evident that the appearance of well-dressed humanity in Whiskers' Rents caused some stir among its inhabitants. Children ran into the houses to tell their mothers—I overheard them—that “a gentleman was coming”; and slatternly, sluttish women peeped at me furtively, through dirt-grimed and paper-plastered windows, as I passed; while men in slouched hats, and with blackened pipes in their mouths, leered at one another as they staggered by, and muttered words only half audible, but amounting to a discontented and surly inquiry as to what a “gentry cove could be wanting in that ken?”

Undeterred, however, by these symptoms of suspicion—which I well understood—I took my way to the old lodging house I have elsewhere described. Old Whiskers, as my readers may remember, had been carried off by the fever; but a worthy representative of this ravenous and rapacious class of predatory animals stood in his place, and occupied his former den, in the shape of a small, dirty, and shrivelled Jew, whose restless movements, and sharp but wandering glances of his piercing eyes, gave evidence of considerable and perfectly needless discomposure while I explained my errand.

“Indeed!” said he, impatiently but with apparent humility, almost before I had done, “I know noting my tear, of the voman. May I ask vat may you be

pleased to vant with any lodger of mine, my tear?" he inquired, tremulously.

"It can be of very little consequence to you what I may happen to want with Mrs. Magrath," I said; "and perhaps it will be more to the purpose if I say at once, that if you can assist me in finding her, I would make it worth your while."

"Ha, ha!" he replied, with sudden alacrity, and an involuntary twinkling of his dark, deep-set eyes; "you understand the way to do business, my tear: it makes great difference, that. Vill you please to valk in, and talk this little matter over, tear sir?" and he led the way into his private apartment, at the door of which he had until then kept me standing. Having admitted me thus far, he carefully closed the door and bolted it, and then placed a seat for me, standing at some little distance, bent forwards towards me, the very picture, as I fancied at the time, of avaricious expectation.

"Vill you be pleased," he said in a whisper, "to give me a description of the person?"

I complied with his request, at the same time saying that there was no need for such profound secrecy and preparation; that my errand was a very simple one. I was in search of the poor woman, whom I feared must be, if living, badly off; and that my intentions towards her were kind and friendly.

He was sure of that, he said, for he could see at first sight that I was an honourable gentleman; "and how much," he wished to know, with trembling earnestness, "did you say, my tear, it might be vorth to a poor man to help you to find the good lady?"

"I mentioned no sum," I said, half amused and half disgusted: "what do you think, now, I should offer?"

"Oh! I am a very poor man," exclaimed the Jew, clasping his hands, as if in supplication, and heaving a heavy sigh.

Reserving my much or little faith in this assertion to be avowed, or not, according to circumstances, I reflected that by taking advantage of this man's evident greediness for gain, I might attain my object, when my own unassisted efforts would probably fail. I therefore told him, after a moment's consideration, that if he would assist me, and successfully, in finding my old nurse, I should be willing to give him ten guineas for his trouble.

I could see, by the lighting up of his countenance, that the offer would be accepted, and that I had found a willing and zealous assistant; nevertheless, it would not have been in accordance with the man's nature not to have attempted to screw an additional guinea or two out of me, "conshidering," as he said, "that a great deal of trouble may be thrown away for nothing, my tear."

I saw there would be nothing so effectual as a retaining fee, and I put a golden guinea into his hand. He eagerly clutched it, with a profusion of thanks and protestations; but still he was not entirely satisfied: his caution suggested that an engagement in black and white would not be so easily evaded as a verbal promise. This was reasonable enough, and, being speedily provided with the materials, I placed the document in his hands.

"And now," I said, "we will begin our inquiries at once, and we cannot do better than set to work on the spot here, in this house of yours."

"But," affirmed the Jew, earnestly, "the woman is not here, and I know nothing of her."

"I quite believe you," said I; "but some of your lodgers may have met with her elsewhere."

This was true, he admitted; and so, without further hesitation, he led the way and I followed.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I AM AT WHISKERS RENTS, SEEKING WHAT I DO NOT FIND, AND FINDING WHAT I DO NOT SEEK.

I SHALL not detain my readers with a description of all the scenes which met my eye, and the replies which our questions elicited, in this tour of inspection and search. The cracked and dilapidated house was crowded, as I had known it many years before, with temporary tenants. Filth there was in rich abundance; dissipation, reeking in its sties; vice, flaunting and shameless in the light of day; brutality, covered, but not hidden, beneath a thin veil of civility, extorted perhaps by fear; and poverty in its many hidden shapes. It was well that I had retained the services of a guide who held over the people with whom we came in contact the wholesome terror of a despotic landlord, and who had besides a pecuniary interest in the success of my researches. As it was, we met but

little encouragement, and no satisfactory solution to our inquiries. In most cases we were met with a distinct and positive denial of any knowledge of such a person as Peggy Magrath, varied occasionally by blustering and oathful demands as to why they (the lodgers) should be bothered with such questions? Evidently, I was looked upon as a spy, perhaps a police officer in disguise, in search of some criminal in hiding; and it was believed that my questions and expressed anxiety about Peggy Magrath were merely a blind to conceal some dangerous purpose—dangerous, because probably almost every inmate of “Whiskers” was, more or less, at variance with the law, or had been. At any rate, “the world was not their friend, nor the world’s law”; and they would, to a man or a woman, have been ready to take up arms against the law, and in favour of any hapless, law-persecuted victim.

Faithful to me (and to himself), however, the landlord conducted me from room to room, and from floor to floor, up the broken and banisterless stairs, until we reached the attic which had been my boyhood’s home. *It had become even a more wretched abode than I had known it.* Some of the rotten rafters had crumbled away, crushed beneath the weight of superincumbent tiles; leaving the roof to bulge fearfully inwards, with great gaps, exposed to the light of day and to every descending shower. At this time the broken floor was sodden with moisture, and a thick fall of sleety snow, which had commenced since my entrance into the miserable house, already covered it, drifting indeed to

every part of the vile loft; while the keen wind whistled through innumerable crevices in roof and wall.

And yet the room was not without its occupant. On a damp and hard straw mattress, in one corner—my old corner—and covered only with the thinnest of coverlets, without blanket above or beneath his emaciated body, lay a fair-haired boy, evidently in the last stage of consumption. He was alone; and his preternaturally bright, full, glistening eyes looked up inquiringly as we entered.

I believe that I started with horror at the sight; I know that I felt horror-stricken; and my guide seemed to think an explanation needed.

The poor boy's mother, he said, was a very poor woman who earned what little she had by needlework, when she could get it; and she was gone out now, he supposed, to look for work or take some home. He only knew that she had the room "scheep, very scheep"; and he shrugged his shoulders.

"And can you reconcile it to your conscience," I said, "to allow a poor child to lie in a hole like this, and hastened to the grave by starvation, cold, and destitution of even the most needful comforts?"

"Vat should I do?" asked the landlord, sharply: "Vy need they come to the poor Jew to ask for a scheep lodging? Yet indeed," he added, however, with a touch of natural feeling, "I did not know they were so badly off. The voman pays her rent always—always."

"Look you," I said, "we will not talk about it; but leave me here; and go, beg or borrow a blanket—two.

three, the more the better—to wrap this poor child in; and then see if you cannot find a better place than this—go, go.”

“And vat should I be the better for that?” demanded the landlord, suspiciously.

I put money in his hand, and he disappeared, while I went and stooped over the boy. Hitherto he had not spoken, only following me with his sparkling eyes, and apparently watching the movement of my lips. But now his own lips moved, and he spoke very faintly: “You are very kind, sir; but it does not matter, you know.”

“What does not matter, my poor boy?” I asked.

“About feeling cold and achy and faint-like. It won’t last long.”

“Indeed, I fear not,” I said, with a choking sensation in my throat; for the scene too vividly called to remembrance my dying mother.

“Ah, but I do not fear,” he said, quietly, and fixing his eyes upon me.

“No! how is this? But stop, your mouth is very parched: you are not hungry?”

No, oh no; he was not hungry, he said.

“Thirsty?”

Yes, a little thirsty: he would like a drink of water; only he did not think there was any.

I remembered that I had an orange in my pocket. I had provided myself with it in anticipation of the foulness of Whiskers’ Rents, and of needing some purifying and invigorating refreshment. In another moment the orange was in my hand; I had broken

the rind, and was holding it to the boy's lips, squeezing the juice, which he sucked and swallowed eagerly. At length his thirst seemed assuaged, and he desisted. And then he stretched out his thin, thin arm, and took me by the hand. "Sir, sir," he whispered, "'Inasmuch as ye have done it—unto the least—the least—of these my brethren—ye have done it unto me;—you know who says so, don't you?" And a strange, lovely, unearthly smile settled on his lips.

"My poor boy, yes," I said, looking at him with astonishment, and pressing softly his withered, faded hand.

"Not poor, not poor!" he repeated. "He won't let me be poor: He won't indeed—

'Since He is mine and I am His,
What can I want beside?'"

It was very wonderful, I thought, as I listened to the simple outpourings of the soul of that dying boy. How many years was it since, in that wretched garret, I had heard the same words from the lips of Fanny Grey; and now this same child-like confidence in the Good Shepherd, which had helped her to rise above her life trials, was supporting one, as young as she, in the prospect of death.

I repeat,—I thought this; but I asked, as a stranger might, "What do you mean, my boy—I will not call you 'poor' again—but what do you mean by saying, 'Since He is mine and I am his'?"

He looked wistfully in my face, and apparently he was satisfied with the examination, for he smiled

peacefully: "I think you know, sir," said he; "but I mean Jesus—Jesus."

"If I were not quite a stranger to you," I said, "I would ask you what makes you think that Jesus is yours and that you are his?"

"His own word and promise, sir," the boy answered. "He says in his very own word, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.'"

"And *are* you one of his sheep, then?" I asked, as gently as I could.

"I believe in him, sir; I love him; and I can trust him," the child whispered; and tears started from his eyes, as though the shadow of a doubt were too painful to be borne.

I wiped his tears away. I stooped down and kissed his cold forehead. I asked him to forgive me if I had given him pain.

"Oh, it is not that, sir; but I am very weak, you see, and a little thing makes me cry now."

"You will not have to cry much more, my dear, happy boy," I said; and my own cheeks were wet with tears as I spoke. "You are going where there is no sorrow and crying, where God himself will wipe away all tears from your eyes."

"Yes, sir, yes; oh yes!"

I continued,—

" 'Yet a season and you know,
Happy entrance will be given;
All your sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven.' "

"Yes, sir, yes; oh yes!" said he again; and then he added, "You would like to pray with me, wouldn't you, sir?"

I knelt down on the floor by his side; and was yet praying with the dying boy when the Jew landlord returned with the blanket. He did not withdraw when he saw how I was engaged, but listened, at least with a show of respect and reverence, and spoke as well as acted, at that time, with more apparent kindness of feeling. It might have been, however, that the hope of gain prompted him to this; for there is a sense in which "money answereth all things," and certainly with this man it seemed to be all-powerful. Before I left, I had removed the poor child, in my own arms, to the next attic (once little Fanny's and her father's home), in which was a fireplace, and the roof of which was tolerably entire. I had caused a fire to be lighted, too, and wrapped the little fellow up warmly. I had also procured wine, and put the glass to his lips; and then I bethought me of engaging medical assistance, though how vain it was to dream of preserving a life already dwindled to the finest thread, I knew full well.

And this put me in mind of the doctor who had visited my mother, as she lay dying; and then I remembered—what it is strange had never occurred to me before—that poor Peggy used to work at his house; and I wondered that I had not thought of making inquiries among her old employers, who might perhaps be able to give me some intelligence of my poor old nurse. But this was not to be thought of now.

I sent for a doctor, however, who came and received my fee, and shook his head gravely, but engaged to attend to the young invalid's comfort while he lived; and then, having done all that seemed in my power, I departed, leaving the landlord to follow up his inquiries for poor Peggy.

I must shorten this part of my story, and bring this chapter to a close. Several successive days I returned to Whiskers' Rents to see my young invalid; and I never knew till then how much I had yet to learn of patience, resignation, and faith in an ever-present though unseen Saviour; never till then saw such an exemplification of the apostle's words, "Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" never till then so fully appreciated another apostle's question, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

I shall not repeat the boy's story, as I heard it afterwards from his mother's lips—it was a very simple one; nor will I, though tempted to do it, give the history of that mother's life; for I must hasten on to conclude my own history. I shall only say, therefore, that in less than a week from my first knowledge of him, the child died. I followed him to the grave, and mourned for him as for a brother. And then I tried to comfort his mother. Years afterwards, when I had a happy and prosperous home, she entered it as my housekeeper, and, by more than twenty years' faithful

services to me and mine, repaid tenfold my small offices of friendship to her dying child.

CHAPTER XLIX.

I HEAR TIDINGS OF PEGGY, REVISIT MY OLD STABLE LOFT,
AND RENEW ACQUAINTANCE WITH BEN THE OSTLER.

THE interest I felt in the stricken child at Whiskers' Rents did not cause me to neglect my search after Peggy Magrath; but it was unsuccessful. Her old employers had not seen her since her imprisonment; probably, therefore, shame for that disgrace had impelled her to seek another sphere for her industry. That she had sought me, however, was pretty certain, for I remembered that she had been seen in Whiskers' Rents, and had held communication with our old landlord; but if the secret of her retirement had been—as it most likely was—intrusted to him, he had carried it with him to the grave.

I had no reason to believe that his successor, the Jew landlord, slackened in his inquiries; for the expectation of a golden reward would keep him on the alert; but he met with success little better than my own. There was one old inhabitant of Whiskers' Rents, indeed, who remembered to have seen my old nurse since the fever, and with him I was brought into communication. He was a German, and one of the few working bees in that hive of profligacy. Why he had chosen such a place for his habitation is inconceivable;



MRS. MAGRATH IN THE STOCKS.

but it had been his home full a quarter of a century. He was a widower, without kith or kin, so far as was known ; he was dirty in his habits and person, and an inveterate smoker ; he tenanted a single room in one of the least miserable houses in the locality, where he ate, drank, smoked, slept, and worked at his bench at some small mechanical trade. In former times, and at rare intervals Peggy had been employed by him in this home ; and she was also his laundress, when he thought he needed one, or when he did not perform that office for himself.

To this old man, whom I had slightly known in my childhood, I was introduced a few days after the funeral of the widow's child ; but he had no recollection of me. He remembered my old nurse, however—"boor Beggy," as he called her—and was sure that she had called on him "in sore drubble."

Could he tell me what the trouble was about?

He was not sure ; but he "daught it vas about de liddle schildt dat she call Roland Leigh ?"

"And how long since was this?" I asked.

He could not say ; he had a bad memory. It might be "dwo, dree, vour, vive year."

"And she did not say where she lived, or might be found?" I once more asked.

"Nein—not at all, mine vriendt."

"Can you tell me how she looked?" said I.

"Look! mid her eyes, I do suppose," replied the old man, drily, emitting a huge volume of smoke from his foreign-looking pipe, which made my eyes water: "mid vat you call de obdics," he added, by way of further explanation.

"True, my good friend; but I mean what sort of appearance had she?"

"Oh, I understandt: abbear! vell: she vas boor Beggy; note vaary different vrom de old vay: she vas vat you call slibdy slobdy: and——"

"She was very poor, then?" said I.

Nein! he could not say dat, responded the German; indeed, he should think not; for when, touched with her evident distress of mind, and supposing it to arise from poverty if not destitution, he offered her alms, she would not receive them. This he said in other words, and added, that "de grade lamendation of boor Beggy vas about de liddle schildt, Roland."

I thanked the old man for answering my questions; and was about to turn away in despair of receiving any further information, when he remembered that Mrs. Magrath had spoken of a stable yard where she had been searching for "de liddle schildt," as the old man persisted in speaking of me, quite at a loss to comprehend, as it seemed, that time had turned the little child into a man, and that, in fact, I myself was the Roland Leigh of whom poor Peggy was in search.

She *had* sought for me, then, and had discovered my retreat. Perhaps if I had not been kidnapped away from my old stable loft, or if I had returned to London immediately after my shipwreck, we might long ago have met; and the thought distressed me, if it did not cause me to murmur and rebel. For, reader, such as Peggy Magrath was, she was inexpressibly dear to me; and the hope of carefully nurturing her in her

age, as she had nurtured me in my childhood, was one of the bright visions of my life.

Whatever other effect the information I had obtained from the old German of Whiskers' Rents had upon me, it quickened my determination to prosecute my researches; and the next leisure hour I could command led me to the stable yard, where I found my old friend at his accustomed occupation, rubbing down a horse with a wisp of straw, and whistling ostlerwise. He was but little altered; only that his whistle, I thought, sounded feebler, and his head was more plentifully sprinkled with grey hairs—which was surely to be expected; for Ben the ostler must have been, at that time, verging on or hastening towards threescore years and five.

I stood by him, as he went on with his job, unconscious of my presence, till a change of posture occasioned him to look up. Then he did not recognise me.

He touched—not his hat, for he was bareheaded—but a stray lock of his grizzled hair, and looked inquiringly, as waiting my commands.

"You don't know me, then, Ben?" I said.

He opened his eyes wide, and looked puzzled; but no gleam of intelligence crossed his countenance; and he shook his head.

"I am Roland Leigh."

If a pistol had been exploded unexpectedly close to his ear, I am not certain that he would have started more naturally, or altered in countenance more completely. Still, he did not speak, nor did he move, until,

closely scanning me from head to foot, and finally suffering his eyes to rest on my face, he gradually relaxed ; his eyes twinkled, as it seemed, with strange emotion, and he laid hold of my extended hand, and returned its pressure with a genuine Yorkshire squeeze, which made my arm tingle to the elbow joint. Then he broke silence.

"I always said thou'd coom back for it," he cried. "I be glad to see thee, Roley. The Lord knows I be glad to see thee; and thou shall ha' it. I knew thou'd coom back for't."

"You were right, you see, Ben; I am come back," said I, a little wondering what he thought I had come back for.

"I've tookeen care on't, Roley," he went on; "but I reckon 'tis a wee bit wore and grimed; but thou winnot mind it, lad. I've tookeen care on't."

"Why, what are you talking about, my friend?" I asked, astonished partly at his strange emotion, partly too at a yet more strange alteration which seemed to have passed over him in his mode of speech—I don't mean in his semi-provincial dialect, but in the earnest solemnity with which he spoke, and in the absence of profane oaths, which I had expected would have broken from his lips at the moment of recognition. And I was still altogether at a loss to understand to what "it" he referred, of which he had taken such care, and for which he had expected me to return.

"The Lord be praised and thanked that thou didn't take it awa' wi' thee," said he, grasping my hand again fervently, and big drops glistened under his

eyelids, till they overflowed, and then down his bronzed cheeks.

It—it—still the “it.” “You must tell me what you mean, Ben,” said I; “I left nothing behind worth having, that I can remember, except——”

“Not in t’ loft, lad? not in t’ loft?”

“Nothing (I was just going to say) except my Bible, and——” I stopped short, and looked closer at my old friend; for the truth, the blessed truth—the hope, at least, that, in the gracious providence of God, that Bible had been made “the power of God to salvation” to the once ignorant and profane old man, flashed on my mind.

“’Tis t’ Bible, lad, I am telling of,” said he, “the Bible thou left in t’ loft;” and once more he took my hand and shook it heartily. “Thou didn’t think there was mercy for poor old Ben, did thee?”

“There’s mercy for all who seek it,” I responded, little less affected than he; “but you must tell me all about it, Ben.”

“Coom up into t’ loft when I’ve put t’ nag in t’ stable,” said he, “and I’ll tell thee:” and, without loss of time, he stabled the horse, and then led the way to my old resting place.

I followed, and there, seated beside old Ben, on a truss of straw, I heard him tell how, some time after my second disappearance, he had happened to find my Bible in its hiding place; how, moved by some strong impulse for which he could not account, he had opened and read chapters, and parts of chapters, from time to time; how suddenly he became alarmed in

his conscience by the statements of revealed truth, respecting the condemnation of transgressors against the Divine law ; how he had no peace by day nor rest by night, but still went on reading, reading, reading the book that had made him miserable, for it had a strange and irresistible fascination ; how, when he was nearly driven to despair, he had obtained some feeble glimmering of the hope of the gospel ; how his perception of the glorious revelation of mercy—mercy for the vilest of the vile—broke in upon his soul ; how he prayed, and prayed again for that mercy, found it, and rejoiced in it ; how his fears and his dreadful despair were swallowed up and lost in the “faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even “the chief of sinners” ; how with joy he had lighted on the promise that the Father would give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him ; how, amidst all these alternations of feelings, and while new desires, affections, and hopes were springing up in his soul, he had become so different from what he once was, as to draw upon himself the observation of everybody in the yard ; and how, when they found out the cause (but, indeed, he had not tried to conceal it), he had been exposed to ridicule, temptation, and persecution ; but how, also, “the blessed Lord Jesus hadn’t let him go.”

All this, and much more, old Ben told me with great simplicity and overflowing gratitude ; and when he had done, he produced my old Bible, wrapped carefully in a handkerchief, and put it into my hands.

It was rather "worn and grimed," as he had said, but it was none the worse for that.

I did not reclaim it. There had been times—in Thieves' Castle, for instance—when I had regretted very deeply that my best companion was left behind, little dreaming of the work it was to do in my old stable loft.

So deeply interested was I in the old ostler's history, that I almost forgot the purport of my visit. At length, when I was bidding him farewell, promising to see him again, however, I bethought me of Peggy Magrath, and told Ben my errand.

Yes, she had sought me at this stable yard. By whatever means she had discovered my retreat, she had followed me; and, in spite of the jokes and jeers to which her earnest manner and her Irish accent had exposed her, from ostlers, grooms, and stable boys, poor Peggy had persevered, for more than two years, in haunting the place, in expectation of some day finding me. Her first visit must have been paid very soon after my disappearance; and her lamentations for me, as the hope of my return became more faint, were very violent. Finally, she discontinued her visits, and more than three years had passed away since she had been seen, so that, until my question recalled it, the circumstance had almost faded from Ben's memory.

This was all the satisfaction I could obtain, and leaving my direction with Ben, in the feeble and forlorn hope that my poor nurse might again seek me there, I departed.

CHAPTER L.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING, LEADING TO IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCES.—I RECEIVE MY FATHER'S PROMISED COMMUNICATION.

ONE more visit, and my private affairs, as well as my employer's, would be finished. Do not suppose, reader, that I had forgotten Fanny Grey, and that it was without a struggle that I determined not to visit Daffodil Farm, and my kind friends, the aged clergyman and Mr. Blake, before returning to Yorkshire. In another year or two I might perhaps venture, but not now.

But if I dared not so far trust myself as to see Fanny, I might pay a visit to her father, if he were to be found, and thank him for the instruction he had given me. Little as education had benefited him, because he wilfully abused his gifts, the rudiments of knowledge he had imparted to me had contributed to my prosperity, and helped me to rise higher than I could have done if I had remained as ignorant as I was before he took me in hand. Moreover, in spite of his degrading habit, he had been a friendly teacher to me. I resolved, if possible, to see him.

On the last day of my sojourn in London, therefore, I proceeded to the house in which I had last known Fanny's father, and knocked at the door. An old woman opened it, and replied to my inquiry, that

Mr. Grey lived there still, but he was very bad: would I please to walk in?

I walked in, and entered the room which had been his workshop and evening schoolroom. The work-board was still there, but unoccupied; and a fire was burning in the grate. It seemed to me that a pleasant change had passed over that small apartment. It was clean; and a few small articles of furniture had been added, which gave it a more habitable appearance. Before I had recovered from my surprise, the woman was gone.

I waited four or five minutes, and then I took up a book which lay on the table. It had Fanny's name in it, in her own handwriting; and I laid it down again with a heavy sigh. At that moment I heard a light step without, the door opened, and then Fanny herself stood before me!

For a moment we were both stricken with sudden surprise; but, on her countenance, that expression speedily changed to one of delight, as she sprang towards me and clasped my hand, and calling me by my old familiar name, said, how kind, how very kind, it was of me to come to see her in her trouble.

“Trouble! what trouble?”

Hadn't I heard, then, how ill her poor father was, and had been for three months? She had come to London to nurse him, but he did not get any better; and a look of sadness spread over her face. And hadn't I heard how kind and good dear uncle Blake had been to her father? how he had brought Fanny to London to take care of him, and supplied her with

money to have everything comfortable, and to pay for medical advice and nursing ?

No, of course, I had heard nothing of all this ; but it accounted for the altered aspect of the room.

“ But the doctor says there is only one hope left for poor father—country air ; and so to-morrow uncle Blake is coming to fetch us, and take father and me both down to Daffodil Farm ; so if you had not come to-day, Roland, you would have missed seeing me—us, I mean ; and I should have been so sorry.”

Sorry ! sorry ! why should Fanny be sorry ? Well, well ; it was not the time exactly for talking about—about anything future ; and if it had been, I am not in the mood to treat my readers with a love scene. All I have to say is, that my resolutions melted away like a white frost in April sunshine ; and, whether for good or evil, before I said good-bye I had promised Fanny that the next time I came up from Yorkshire, I would spend a week at Daffodil Farm.

No, we did not speak of love ; but I knew then, as well as I know now, that we understood each other, and that Fanny was not shocked or angry at my presumption ; and I travelled down to Yorkshire the next day with a light heart.

Soon after my return, I received a packet with a foreign post-mark. It was my father's promised communication, containing some portion of his history, and a short, meagre note, to inform me that he had reached his destination. He also enclosed a certificate of his marriage with my mother. This might be of

use to me, he said; and, as it could be of none to him, he sent it to keep company with the portrait he had left in my hands.

There was nothing in the letter, and nothing in the history which accompanied it, calculated to give me pleasure or hope. Even the confessions they contained were too evidently wrung from him by disappointment and failure, while one lesson seemed to be stamped on every page, paragraph, and line—namely, that education, talents, foresight, promptitude, hardihood, and courage, when misapplied to the service of sin, do but increase the power of mischief, and entail the greater curse upon their unhappy possessor and upon the world.

CHAPTER LI.

I SET OFF ON A JOURNEY.

I NEED not narrate the history of the next two or three years of my life. It is enough to remember, with gratitude, that they were prosperous years with me. If my time was fully occupied, and my mind pretty generally kept on the stretch to meet the demands of my employer's business, I do not think I was any the worse for that; and if at times I breathed a half regretful sigh for some slight relaxation of the bonds which bound me so closely to the ordinary concerns of life, I reproved myself by recollecting what I once was, what I might have been, and what,

in all probability, I should have been, if the fear of God—that “beginning of wisdom”—had not been impressed on my soul.

In the time which I thus hastily pass over, I heard no more of or from my unhappy father, and was even ignorant of his place of refuge. Gradually, his image faded from my mind; or rather, the memory of my sad and brief knowledge of him became like the painful remembrance of a troubled night dream.

Not so, however, was it with thoughts of my mother. These grew upon me in sorrowful distinctness. Yet, in thinking of her wrongs and griefs, I felt a hope that she had sought and found access to the Burden-bearer. Such comforting assurance mingled with my remembrances of the sad drama of her comparatively short life; and very often I gazed at that portrait of her which my father had so carelessly abandoned, till my eyes filled with tears.

During that time also I had not forgotten my old friend, poor Peggy Magrath. If I had been inclined to pass her by in my memory, the Jew landlord of Whiskers' Rents would have defeated my purpose; for with a keen desire to pocket the promised reward, the fellow was, as I had reason to know, unceasing in his researches and inquiries; and scarcely did any three months pass in which I did not receive from him a dirty, ill-spelled epistle to inform me of some fresh clue he had obtained to her retreat. But these all terminated in disappointment—disappointment to me, at least; not to him, perhaps; for every letter also contained a plea for “some trifling consideration for all

the panes and acspensis, my dear." At length I got tired of this perpetual feeing, and peremptorily refused to disburse another penny until poor Peggy were found. And then the correspondence began very sensibly to slacken.

Shall I add that in these two or three years I had taken two or three trips into Kent, and spent, each time, two or three days at Daffodil Farm? On the first occasion I had to condole with Fanny Grey on the death of her father. He had never regained strength; but, after a lingering reprieve, he dwindled into helpless and hopeless imbecility both of body and mind; and then came the last scene of all. Poor Fanny! she was not to be comforted.

On the next occasion she had overcome her first grief, and we had two or three moonlight walks in the old garden. Somehow or other, Mrs. Blake forgot to be alarmed about Fanny's catching cold, and I heard nothing about Mrs. Suds and her early morning requirements.

On the third occasion, my friend Mr. Blake opened upon me a battery of good-humoured raillery: "Well! if I didn't think 't 'ud be so, Roley. I said so to Jenny, but she said I was—— but never mind. The best blessings on ye both! Fanny 'll make ye a good wife, she wool, Roley; and if I didn't know y'd make her a good husband, you shouldn't ha' her, you shouldn't. But you must wait a bit, Roley; we can't spare Fanny yet—we can't."

This was the sum and substance of my good old friend's consent-giving, when I told him what I

wanted. How my courtship sped with Fanny herself—I shall spare my readers *that*.

How I came to have time to give to such a purpose, I think I have already partly explained. My headquarters, it is true, were in Yorkshire, at the factory; but my employer's concerns demanded a frequent agent in London and elsewhere, and he chose to entrust me with these travelling commissions. Thus I had not only made periodical journeys southward, but, after a time, my business engagements took me often into Scotland, and occasionally into the sister country, Ireland, also. But of this hereafter.

Two or three years had passed away, then; and I was one day at my desk in the counting house, when Mr. Simmonds entered with a newspaper in his hand.

"Here is something that concerns you, I fancy, Mr. Leigh," said he; "you had better read it."

I took the paper, and read as follows:—

"——SHIRE.—In the summer of —— a woman, apparently an Irishwoman, accompanied by a boy, seven or eight years of age, called at a farmhouse in the village of S——, on matters connected with private family affairs. If that woman and boy be still living, and will communicate with Messrs. Pricker and Pounce, Furnival's Inn, they may possibly hear of something to their advantage."

The woman *and* boy! The boy was living, certainly, for there could be no doubt to whom the advertisement referred; but the woman—who could say that she yet lived?

"At all events you had better see to it," said my employer.

"But I shall not be in London for four months to come," said I.

"You will be in London next week, if you take my advice," said Mr. Simmonds. "It is true nothing may come of it, and then there will be a journey lost; but it is worth risking, and you had better go."

In a few days I was in London, and was knocking at the office-chambers of Messrs. Pricker and Pounce. The information I obtained from these gentlemen was sufficiently meagre. It amounted only to this—that Mr. M—— (I shall not give my grandfather's full name) was seeking for an heir, but they knew no particulars, and I was referred to an attorney at Fairtown, in ——shire, for whom they (Messrs. Pricker and Pounce) were London agents.

I took my place the next day on a coach to Fairtown, bearing with me my mother's portrait and the certificate of her marriage, but with no expectation that these accidental and questionable evidences of my relationship would establish any claim to my grandfather's wealth. Let me say, not boastingly, but truly, that though I was not altogether indifferent to money and its just possession, I would not have travelled on this doubtful errand, but for the hope that tardy justice might at length be done to my mother's memory; while, if my aged grandfather had been as poor as I supposed he might be rich, I would have taken a pilgrimage of twenty times as long to hear

him revoke the anger he had borne against his child, and whisper her forgiveness.

The road to Fairtown was the same road which I had travelled so many years before with poor Peggy, and every mile of it brought old remembrances of my faithful nurse to mind. Here was the grassy bank where we took our first meal, and the stream from which we slaked our thirst. There was the farmhouse at which she begged "a dhrink of flit-milk, or butther-milk for the poor tendher orphin." Here, the town where our first night's lodging was obtained, and the very house in which we slept, with the very same board over the same old dirty window, announcing, in a jumble of small and capital letters, with various degrees of leaning from the perpendicular, that "Logins for Travilerrrs" were to be found. And there, further on, was the long hill up which, when I was so tired that I could walk no further, but sat down and cried, poor Mrs. Magrath carried me on her strong back. All these, and scores of memories besides, crowded into my mind with the freshness of but a yesterday's transaction.

The journey occupied more than two long days—a short time this, however, compared with our former wearisome travels on foot. At length I was put down at Fairtown late at night, and early on the following day I was in the presence of the attorney, to whom I delivered the credentials of Messrs. Pricker and Pounce, and told him who I was. But neither was this gentleman able to enlighten me on the purposes of my grandfather, by whose directions he had inserted

the advertisement in the papers. He knew only that Mr. M—— was not only old, but in failing health; that having passed a miserable sort of existence in scraping together money, he was supposed to be rich, while those who might have expected to inherit his wealth had passed out of the world before him.

“His unmarried daughter died five years ago,” continued the attorney; “and a year after that the married daughter died too, and left only one child, a young woman now, but a chit of a girl then, who has lived ever since with her grandfather. And a few months ago the old farmer took a crotchet into his head.”

“What crotchet?” I wished to know.

“You had better go and see him. You will hear it from his own lips if you prove your relationship to his satisfaction, and he should take a fancy to you.”

“Both of which you think doubtful?” said I.

“Yes,” he said. “That is to say,” he added, “you have no legal proof of being the son of his youngest daughter; and whether or not he will take a fancy to you will depend pretty much on his mood at the time.”

Not much more passed. The village in which my grandfather lived was about five miles from Fairtown, and, later in the day, I proceeded thither on foot.

CHAPTER LII.

MY GRANDFATHER'S FARM, AND MY GRANDFATHER.

I PASSED by the village alehouse in which I had been prepared for my first momentous interview with my grandfather, and the parish stocks in which poor Peggy had suffered the mortification of defeat, and endured the ignominy of public disgrace. A few minutes afterwards I was wading through the straw yard, and stood before the door of my mother's early home. Here I paused and looked around.

The place had a depressingly neglected appearance. The farmhouse itself seemed to be falling rapidly into decay for want of needful repairs. All traces of paint had departed from the wood-work of the building ; and windows were dirty with long neglect, their broken panes stopped up with rags. A kitchen garden on one side of the house was overrun with weeds, and gaps in its rotten palings had admitted a large family of pigs, who were just then routing up the soil, and trampling down the little apology for cultivation which yet remained. At the same time, these signs of careless negligence probably did not arise from poverty ; for casting my eyes over the homestead, I saw stacks of wheat which had evidently borne more than one winter's storms ; and in a broad meadow, near at hand, more than a dozen cows were quietly grazing, or chewing the cud in the shade of a clump of venerable elms. In short, the farm, or what I could see of it, looked

prosperous enough; while all around connected with the domestic economy of a household showed tokens of utter abandonment to ruin.

I had time to make these reflections, for I had made my approach unobserved; and even when I raised my hand and knocked at the door, which had neither bell nor knocker, the summons was unanswered.

Tired at length of making unprofitable observations, and benumbing my knuckles to no purpose, I moved my position; and taking a few steps towards the deserted and ill-used garden, I caught sight of a boy, crouched behind an overgrown, untrimmed gooseberry bush. His back was turned towards me; and he was so busily and felicitously engaged in picking and crunching the unripe fruit which scantily hung on its straggling branches, that he had been oblivious of my repeated knocking at the door.

I lifted up my voice to a loud "Hallo!" and in a moment the culprit, starting to his feet, turned his big crimsoned face towards the quarter whence the alarm had proceeded. For a moment he stood staring at me in mute astonishment, scratching his head with one hand, and wiping his overfull mouth with the other. Then he turned again, and would have fled if I had not again spoken.

"What are you doing there, my boy?"

"Who be you?" said he, when he had bolted, in one enormous gulp, the mouthful of green gooseberries, chewed and unchewed, and answering my question by a counter interrogatory, while he looked at me half defiantly, half fearfully.

"I am a stranger," I said, "come to see Mr. M——."

"You bean't the doctor?" said he.

"No, I am not a doctor; but I want to see your master; and I have been knocking at the door, and cannot make anybody hear."

"Aw," said he, with a grin, "you shouldn't 'a goe'd to that door; nawbody beed dare: you should 'a goe'd to back."

"Very well; but I don't see my way to the back: suppose you were to go and get somebody to open the door for me, and let me in."

"Naw, naw; front door be all locked up and bolted: you must go to back."

"You must show me the way, then," said I; "and I'll give you sixpence."

The promise of such a startling reward caused the boy to open his eyes wider than before, and quickened his steps. That is to say, Lubin advanced three paces from the gooseberry bush, and beckoned me, with a sly look of intelligence, to enter the garden.

"Where be the sixpence?" he said, holding out his hand, when I reached him.

"Here it is," giving it to him; "but now, before we go any further, you must tell me a little about Mr. M——. I suppose he is your master?"

"Ees," said the boy.

"And does he pay you for getting into his garden and eating his gooseberries?" said I.

"I be minding the hogs," said he; "I come in to driv 'um out o' the gharn."

"But you didn't drive them out," said I. "See, they are routing up the potato rows."

"Zo they be," said Lubin, taking up a stick, and making a feeble pretence of driving them away; "they hool do't. If I driv 'um out 'o one gup, they come in at t'other."

"But your master would not be pleased to find you neglecting your work, and eating his gooseberries, I suppose."

"Aw, but," said the boy, "old M—— han't got no legs, he han't." And the boy grinned wider than before.

"No legs?"

"No use in 'um. He be laid up, and can't stir out of his chair—the old man, he can't."

"Indeed! But then it is still worse in you to be neglecting your duty."

The boy grunted that he was minding the hogs; but it was no use to try to keep them out of the garden.

"Who keeps house for your master?" I wished to know.

"Polly Randell," he replied: "old master be Polly's grand'ther."

"Then it is Polly Randell I had better ask to see," I said. "And now show me the way into the house."

"Aw, but Polly Randell is at work out at plough," said he, moving on, and conducting me, by a circuitous route, through the neglected garden to the back part of the rambling old farmhouse. When there, I perceived that there was a shorter cut to the back door from the straw yard, which I had not before observed.

"There's Polly," said my guide, pointing to a field at some distance, where, to my surprise, I saw a female figure holding the stilt of a plough, and skilfully, as it seemed to my inexperienced judgment, turning up a deep straight furrow, while the horses were led by a boy.

Without waiting to give any further explanation, my guide pushed open the door, and admitted me into a large brick-floored washhouse. The first sight which presented itself there was the carcass of a large and recently killed hog, suspended, slaughter house-wise, by its hind legs to a strong hook in the rafters overhead.

"Polly Randell stuck *him*," said the boy; "she sticks a hog regular prime, Polly doo's. And she'll cut him up to-night, too," he added, admiringly.

"Oh, indeed!" said I, in some embarrassment, as I was thus made acquainted with the singular accomplishments of my unknown fair cousin. "But how am I to get to old Mr. M——? Is there no servant within call?"

The boy made me no answer, but, leading the way through the washhouse, he raised a whoop, which met with a response from a shrill voice from the upper regions.

"Come down, woo'l ye, Sal?" he rejoined; "here be a man in a tail-cwoat wants to see measter." And saying this, Lubin disappeared by the way he came, leaving me to wonder what scene would next open.

I had not long to wait. Perhaps the "tail-cwoat" had something to do with it; but all events, a minute



I AM ACKNOWLEDGED BY MY GRANDFATHER

did not elapse before a dirty, slatternly girl made her appearance, and, after honouring me with a broad, gaping stare, condescendingly expressed her willingness to introduce me to the old farmer. I followed her, therefore, through a long passage, and up a flight of stairs into a good-sized chamber, at one end of which was a bed, and at the other a small fireplace and a large easy chair. "That's the master," said my introducer, pointing to a living object in the chair, and vanishing as she spoke. That object was my grandfather.

Greatly altered since I saw him last, brandishing his heavy whip over the shoulders of poor Peggy Magrath! He had been stricken with paralysis: he was shrivelled, deaf, and toothless: baldheaded, too, I afterwards found; but this was now hidden from me by a red woollen nightcap.

With a weak and piping voice, he demanded who I was, and what I wanted. I replied by placing before him the advertisement which had brought me to S——. He trembled violently; and grasping me by the wrist, held me tight and drew me towards him, nearer and nearer. "It is Nelly's boy," he cried, with an exceeding bitter cry; and, releasing his hold upon me, he sank back in his chair.

CHAPTER LIII.

I AM ACKNOWLEDGED BY MY GRANDFATHER, AND
INTRODUCED TO MY COUSIN.

"'Tis only one of his swoonds. He'll be all right by'm-by," said the servant girl, whom I had hastily summoned when my grandfather fell back, apparently insensible.

"Does he often have such attacks as this, then?" I asked, somewhat surprised at the indifference with which the damsel looked upon what seemed to me a serious affair.

"Oh, yes, to be sure: he is sitch a silly old man, you know," said she, without moving a muscle.

"Well, but surely something should be done for him," said I; for the "silly old man" gave no sign of returning consciousness, but lay back on his chair, with his clenched hands falling at his sides, and his glazed eyes fixed and staring on vacancy. "Had you not better send for his granddaughter?" I suggested.

"I should catch it if I did, I reckon," said she: "but I'll soon set him up again;" and while I looked on with stupid astonishment, the strong-armed lass lifted the old man bodily on to his chair, roughly pulling him forward with one hand, while with the other she snatched off his red nightcap, and then, stooping over him, she blew with all the force of her lungs into his ear. "That'll do, I guess, for this time," said she,

stepping back a pace or two, and watching complacently the effects of this strange treatment.

It certainly was effectual, for in less than a minute consciousness returned, ushered in by what might have passed for a deep groan, only it was more like a grunt.

"What ha' you been doing to me?" he piped feebly, and looking threateningly at his rough helper

"Nawthing," said she; "only you've bin poorly agin, and I've bin and brought you to, you silly old man."

"Oh," he growled, "and a nice way of bringing to you've got; but I'll make it all straight with you some of these days. Go along; what d'ye stand staring at? But where's my cap, you witch? you want me to catch my death o' cold, do ye?"

A sharp retort seemed to rise to the girl's lips: but perhaps she remembered the stranger in the "tail-cwoat," and therefore refrained. Silently and contemptuously she picked up the cap, and replaced it on my grandfather's bald head, and then vanished.

This was the first scene I witnessed in my grandfather's house, and I shall pass over very briefly the history of the week that I remained in the neighbourhood.

But first let me explain, that though reduced to a state of pitiable bodily helplessness, it did not appear to me that the mind of my aged relative was radically weakened. Certainly, the sharp and incessant grasping after money, which I suppose had marked him through life as a miser, and the sense of his importance as a rich man, together with his love of arbitrary tyranny,

a specimen of which I had witnessed so many years before, and which had been at the foundation of my poor mother's errors and sufferings—these clung to him in his extremity ; and it was a daily and hourly source of inexpressible wretchedness to him that, retaining the will, he had lost the power of exercising his propensities ; and that, according as he had meted to others, was the same measure meted to him again.

The death of my aunt Martha was the first blow which fell with any weight on the old farmer ; for though she had exercised some control over him, she had inherited too much of his own thrifty disposition not to be his faithful slave and coadjutor. The death of his married daughter, which left him childless, did not afflict him so severely, however, as did the after marriage of his son-in-law, Randell, to a second wife. Then, as I was given to understand, his rage rose almost to insanity ; and, threatening disinheritance in case of disobedience, he insisted on taking to his home the only child of the former marriage. It was thus that my cousin, who has already been introduced by name as "Polly Randell," became the drudge and companion of our grandfather.

She was, as the attorney had told me, a mere girl, but her will was as strong and her temper as determined as the old farmer's ; and by the time she became a woman, from being the sport of tyranny, she had learned to tyrannize. Meanwhile, in her way—a way which he highly approved—she had become so useful that her services could not easily be dispensed with by her grandfather. Alike ignorant of

and disdaining all feminine accomplishments, for which, indeed, there was little requirement in my grandfather's household, she saved him the full wages of a labouring man by her industry in the work of the farm. This was the state of affairs when the old farmer was suddenly stricken with paralysis. From that time he had been compelled to give up much of the management of his business to his masculine granddaughter, and had resigned himself into her hands. Not entirely, however; for, in the solitude of his chamber, thoughts of other days came into his mind. He remembered that he once had another daughter: perhaps he thought with remorse of his harsh rejection of her, and his cruel pertinacity of parental displeasure. At any rate, he remembered that she had been thrust from his door with an infant in her arms; that, a few years afterwards, that infant, grown into a boy, had been commended to his affection and forgiveness by his dying child—but all in vain. He had brooded over all this, till, irritated by neglect and stung with indifference, he had consulted his attorney at Fairtown about seeking for that boy; and the advertisement which drew me to Blankshire was the result of the conference. Having brought my needful explanation to this point, I continue my narrative.

The likeness, fancied or real, which my grandfather had discovered in my countenance to his once favourite daughter, and which had produced the temporary emotion I have described, paved the way for his full acknowledgment of my claims to relationship when I

whatever might have been deficient, and notwithstanding the strange rough work in which my cousin had just been engaged, her face, hands, and dress were alike faultlessly clean; and this unexpected qualification enlisted my feelings, to a certain extent, in her favour.

"So you have been having one of your swoonds again, have you, grandfather?" said the amazon, in a full but far from harsh or unpleasant voice, without honouring me with a glance.

"Ay, ay, the silly old man has been going off agin: but no matter, he bean't a-going yet in 'arnest, Polly, so you needn't think it," exclaimed the old farmer, petulantly. "You needn't be in a hurry, Polly."

"Who said I was in a hurry?" said my young kinswoman, apparently unmoved: "I can wait," she added, laughing—not a disagreeable laugh either, but just such a gentle exercise of the risible muscles as some young ladies who rejoice in a dimpled chin and a fine set of teeth rather cultivate. Now, my cousin had a very fine set of teeth, white as the purest ivory, and a very engaging dimple when she smiled: so her quiet laugh was rather agreeable.

"Yes, yes; you must wait, Polly, because you can't help it, you know," rejoined my grandfather: "but don't you see there's a gentleman here? Why don't you speak to him?"

"Because you haven't told me his name and his business," replied the young woman. "Who is he, and what does he want?" she added, glancing at me, as I thought, rather superciliously. She had heard of

me, no doubt, from the slatternly handmaid below; but the "tail-cwoat," with the dignity it conferred, was wasted on Miss Randell.

"He's Nelly's boy, your aunt Nelly's boy," snarled rather than spoke our grandfather. "Han't I told you he'd be turning up one of these days?"

"Is it true what that silly old man says?" demanded she, turning towards me, and looking very earnestly in my face. These were the first words she had spoken, which grated harshly on my ear; but I did not like to hear her call her near relation a silly old man, whatever might have been his just desert of that title. I answered, however, that I certainly was the son of her mother's younger sister, and I offered my hand in friendly greeting. She did not take it at first, but looked at me still more earnestly, fixing her full grey eyes very firmly on mine, when she had taken account, as it seemed, of every separate feature. At length she put her hand in mine, and grasped it energetically. "So you are my cousin," said she; "and perhaps gran'ther thinks, and you think, I aren't glad to see you here. If you do, you don't know nothing about it. I am glad, and I don't mind saying so."

"Ullo, Polly! what's that you say?" shouted our aged relative, whose infirmity of deafness had probably debarred him the full benefit of my cousin's kind words, but who probably anticipated a very different scene.

"I say," repeated Polly, in a loud and distinct tone, "that if this young man is my poor aunt Nelly's son, and my cousin, I am glad to see him. And as you

didn't behave like a father to poor aunt Nelly, you ought to make it up to my cousin, you ought."

"Hold your stupid tongue, Polly Randell," cried the aged man, in a tone of fierce exasperation. "If I'd a' got the use of my limbs as I had years ago," he added, making a vain effort to rise from his chair, and falling back heavily.

"Sit still, do," said my cousin calmly, as though this kind of aggravating controversy were the ordinary mode of intercourse between them. "I say, you ought to make it up to my cousin. Yes, I know what your silly head is running on now," she added, after a pause. "You've talked of it before now, and I see it in the twinkle of your eye; but it isn't agoing to be, for all that, and so I tell you. Has cousin had anything to eat or drink since he's been here?" she asked abruptly, as though she had said too much, or were desirous of changing the topic.

"No, Polly Randell, no," said my grandfather; "we've been so busy a-talking, han't we, Nelly's boy?"

"I thought so," resumed the young housekeeper; "talking doesn't cost anything, does it grand'ther?"

I interrupted an angry retort by protesting that I had not needed any refreshment, that I had dined before leaving Fairtown, and that the object of my visit was accomplished by the interview I had with my grandfather. But my cousin interposed. If "grand'ther" was stingy, it was no reason she should be; and besides, she wanted to talk some, as well as the old man: weren't we cousins? If I had had my

dinner, she hadn't had hers, only an "elevener," for she was but just come in from plough.

"What ha' you got for dinner, Polly?" demanded the helpless old man, with some appearance of interest.

"I reckon it doesn't matter to you, grand'ther," said she: "you've had yours."

"Yes, it does," he answered sharply; "you be eating me out of house and home, you be, among you. Come now," he added beseechingly, "what ha' you got for dinner?"

"Chitterlings, if you must know, you silly old man," said my cousin, laughing the same laugh as before. "Can you eat chitterlings, cousin?"

The mysterious word—mysterious to me; for at that time I did not know what *chitterlings* meant—the mysterious word seemed to open a new interest to our grandfather; for before I could acknowledge my ignorance, he had beckoned my cousin to his chair, and was asking her, in a loud whisper, "How much did he weigh, Polly? how much did he weigh?"

The answer, whatever it might be, did not satisfy the inquirer: "Be ye sure, Polly? I reckon there's a stun' or two more than that." Assured of correctness in this particular, a question arose as to what portions of the slain animal were to be sold for ready money, and at how much a "stun'"—one predominant idea in my grandfather's mind appearing to be that every mortal being around him, his granddaughter included, was combining to rob him of his property, and that eventually, after having been eaten out of house and home, he should die in the parish

poorhouse, and this, after boasting to me of his farm, his stock, his crops, and of his money in the bank—his money, money !

Occupied with these doleful forebodings, my grandfather—after finding that I intended returning to Fairtown that evening, and making me promise to see him again next day, when he should have something to say to me—permitted me to leave the room with my cousin ; and shortly afterwards, having effected a narrow escape from the *chitterlings*, I retraced my steps to “ mine inn ” at Fairtown, thinking how little my poor rich grandfather was to be envied, and repeating to myself the lines :—

“ Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade ;
But unextinguished avarice still remains,
And dreaded losses aggravate his pains ;
He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
His bonds of debt and mortgages of lands ;
Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.”

Thoughts more solemn and sad supervened. I thought where it said that covetousness is idolatry, and that the covetous cannot enter the kingdom of God and of heaven. I thought of this aged relative of mine going to the grave, but not as “ a shock of corn fully ripe,” but rather as a bundle of stubble fit for nothing but destruction. I thought of the Lord’s emphatic question, “ What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ”

I thought of the apostle's fearful warning, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." I thought of all this till it was too painful for me. And then I turned my thoughts to the poor boy in my old garret at Whiskers' Rents; poor in this world—oh, how poor!—but rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has prepared for those who love him; and, as he lay dying, resting on a Saviour's promises, and trusting in a Saviour's love; and then I thought of the words of another apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

CHAPTER LIV.

MY COUSIN POLLY—AND MY GRANDFATHER'S CROTCHET.

I HAVE said that I was a week in my grandfather's neighbourhood. I might have said, under his roof and his guest; for on the second day, when I returned from Fairtown, my cousin insisted on my remaining at the farm, and my grandfather acquiesced. If any inducement was needed, it was supplied by my cousin,

who promised me that I should sleep in my mother's—"poor aunt Nelly's"—own little room. I loved my cousin with a brotherly sort of love from this time, and could have embraced her with gratitude for the proffered indulgence.

Not that I should not have slept better and sounder in any room than *that*. It was not only the same room, but it had the same paper on the walls—coarse, blotchy, damp, discoloured, and tattered now; on the scarcely discernible pattern of which, while I lay sleepless in bed in the early morning I could dimly trace fantastic figures of old men's heads, on which my mother's eyes had once been fixed. The bedstead, too, old-fashioned, lumbering, worm-eaten; and the scanty furniture of the room, which had never been meddled with or changed—so my cousin told me—since my mother last slept in it, nor had the room been used. Why should it have been? There were more rooms in the large old farmhouse than were needed by its usual inmates; and as to visitors, I was the first visitor she had ever known, said my cousin.

I occupied the room, then, night after night; but thoughts of my mother kept me awake.

My cousin was an enigma to me. Coarse and rough by habit, constant associations, and daily occupations, she had yet a delicacy of perception that might have shamed and put to the blush many I have since known with high pretensions to good breeding and politeness. Ignorant of feminine accomplishments, and of all but the least and lowest acquirements of education (meaning by education, school learning), she

had good sense enough to compensate for much of this deficiency. Brought up in a school of avarice, and herself exacting and sharp, there was room for generous feelings in her bosom. Even her daily exposure to unfeminine toil had not destroyed her natural comeliness—it seemed but to have ripened and enriched it; and I may add that, coarse and strange and inappropriate as her costume was, there was a certain grace with which it was worn, which destroyed, or at least qualified, its grotesque effect. Perhaps I am prejudiced, however, in these remembrances; for after being at first puzzled by my cousin's countenance and the interest I felt stealing over me, I suddenly discovered how like she was—and yet how unlike!—to my mother's portrait—to my mother herself, I have no doubt, before cruelty and sorrow had marred her loveliness.

Day after day I sat with my aged and helpless relative, listening to his complaints of neglect and tyranny, varied occasionally, however, with praises of Polly Randell's good management and industry; and to his regretful reminiscences of days gone by when he "wouldn't ha' turned his back on any man at a day's work—not he." I induced him, too, though he was reluctant, to speak of my mother; and drew from him—still reluctantly—a few expressions of regret that he had dealt harshly towards her, and for her after sorrows and early death. But he would make it up to me, he would: so he said.

He had very little curiosity to know my history;

and I felt so sure that it would have so little interest to him, and so little excite his sympathy, that I was almost silent regarding the events of my life. I was, I hope and believe, more anxious to arouse his anxieties and concern respecting the awful eternity on the brink of which he was evidently tottering; but he listened first with stolid indifference, and then with undisguised impatience to my words. He didn't know—he reckoned 'twas all right—he had been a good sort of man, he believed—he hadn't wronged anybody—had always paid his dues, always—gone to church sometimes, when he was able. Oh! he was all right, so I needn't bother. From this it seemed impossible to move him.

Day by day, too, I went, at my cousin's invitation, out into the fields where she was at work. She was not only kind, but cordial. She knew why our grandfather had sought me out, she said; and she was glad he had found me. If he left me half what he was worth, she shouldn't mind that, for it was no more than my right; I was as near of kin to him as she was, and he owed me something for being so hard to "poor aunt Nelly." Yes, she *was* glad, she repeated, again and again, that she had got a cousin. It was so *unked* to feel all alone in the world; and since her own mother died, she had felt all alone: her father did not care for her now, he had another wife and a young family growing up. This—put in different words—was the substance of my cousin's communications.

Several days passed away, and it was not only desirable but necessary for me to return to business.

I said so; and it was easy to perceive that the intimation was not unwelcome to my grandfather, who, I have no doubt, began to consider that feeding an idle mouth was the reverse of profitable. "Ah! business mustn't be neglected, eh? Nelly's boy," said he. "Keep thy business, and thy business 'll keep thee, eh?"—and then he fell into one of his dozing fits.

Let me say here, that after the surprise of my arrival, and his recognition of me as "Nelly's boy," he had shown no more emotion regarding me; and though he had more than once hinted that he had something of importance to communicate, he had not yet approached the subject, whatever it might be. Now, however, it broke out.

It was two or three hours after noon: through the morning I had been, as usual, with my cousin on the farm, helping her after a fashion, if I remember rightly, in some agricultural labour till I was tired. Then I had left her to finish her day's work, while I strolled home on the plea of spending an hour or two with our grandfather. So much for explanation.

"Nelly's boy," broke out Mr. M——, suddenly rousing himself from his torpor—"Polly Randell be a rare 'un, bean't she?"

I could truly answer this question in the affirmative; and I did so.

"A rare 'un, a rare 'un," repeated my grandfather, approvingly. "Nelly's boy, you shall marry her."

Marry her! Polly Randell! my cousin! My wildest guesses would not have hit upon this solution of my grandfather's crotchet, at which the Fairtown attorney

had hinted. I nearly laughed aloud; but I did not. I merely said, Impossible!—of course my grandfather was joking.

Joking! no; why should he joke? I was to be Polly Randell's husband, and she my wife: it was perfectly settled, in his mind.

"But, grandfather, this cannot be," said I.

Not be, when he had settled it? the old propensity to the exercise of arbitrary tyranny breaking out afresh, as it was ever breaking out—helpless as he was—and provoking rebellion, personal neglect, and personal tyranny, as its natural result. Not be, when he had said it? I was not married already, was I? He had put that question to me, in a light, indifferent sort of way, I then remembered, in our first interview.

"No, not married, certainly, grandfather; but certainly engaged to be married as soon as——as soon as a propitious time comes."

"You must break off that match, Nelly's boy," said he.

"Sir! my dear grandfather!"

"Break it off, break it off," he repeated hastily.

"I cannot do that," said I, sternly, if I spoke as I felt.

Why couldn't I? Was the girl I wanted to marry better than Polly Randell?

I was not entitled, and it would be very impertinent in me, to draw comparisons. I had too much respect for my cousin, I said, to permit myself to do so.

Well, was she richer? was she as rich as Polly Randell was likely to be, some day?

"I judge not, sir; but what then?"

"What then, Nelly's boy? what then?" The question seemed so ludicrous that the aged man laughed derisively as he repeated it.

There was a short silence, and I hoped the discussion would drop, but it did not.

"Nelly's boy," said he, trembling with excitement, "I've worked and worked and struv' and struv'; I've got together farm and stock and crop, and there's money in the bank—money, money; and I bean't agoing to have it parted when I be dead. There's Polly Randell has been athrowing herself away on a furriner, or wants to (here was the secret, then, of my grandfather's anxiety to find "Nelly's boy"), and here's you athrowing yourself away on a furriner, and it isn't agoing to be;" and he struck the table fiercely with his clenched fist, reminding me of the day when I had shrunk with affright from that hand, armed as it then was with a heavy whip. But I was a boy then, a man now, and he—well, well. He paused when he had struck the table, and looked at me threateningly.

"And you can be so unnatural, then, and so unwise, as to risk the happiness of your granddaughter, to say nothing of the wealth of which you boast, as to seek to wed her with one of whom you know so little as you know of me, and against her will, in the miserable expectation of your property remaining unbroken in the hands of your descendants? For shame—think better of it."

"I say it isn't agoing to be," resumed my grandfather, following the current of his own thoughts, and giving no heed to my remonstrances; "and the first of you two that crosses me doesn't have stick nor stone, nor hoof, nor clod, nor farthing."

"That first will I be, then," I said. "I did not come here to rob my cousin of the just reward of her faithful services; and I rejoice—not that I have offended you, grandfather; but—"

He did not give me time to complete the sentence I had begun. Passion gained the mastery: he foamed at the mouth—bade me begone—strove to rise, and then sank back in his chair exhausted.

I bade farewell to my cousin that evening. I would willingly have kept from her the cause of my hasty retreat; but she guessed it, and challenged me in her frank, straightforward way: "Grand'ther has been trying to make a match between us, hasn't he, cousin?"

"Well—something of the sort," said I.

"And you told him you wouldn't, didn't you?"

"You guess, correctly: yes."

"You should have left that to me, cousin; for though I like you, I wouldn't have had you."

"And I like you, my dear cousin; but I couldn't have had you. Good bye." And I strode on to Fairtown. In a few days I was again in Yorkshire.

CHAPTER LV.

I AM IN IRELAND, AND AM CAUGHT IN A MOUNTAIN
STORM.

NOT long after my return from the strangely terminated visit to my grandfather, business engagements took me to the North of Ireland. I have no intention of inflicting on my indulgent readers a lengthened history of travels in that country: it is sufficient to say that my employer's affairs called me to some of its larger towns, lying at wide distances apart; and that I adopted the usual mode of travel—almost the only mode then practicable in many parts of Ireland—that of riding on horseback. To this end I had purchased a strong, serviceable roadster in Dublin, intending to dispose of it again when the need for it had ceased.

I had been several days at a large town which I shall only designate by its initial letter, C——; and it was on the afternoon of a gloomy, sultry, autumn day that I finally left my comfortable quarters there, to hurry on to another town, some twenty miles distant.

“You had better wait till to-morrow morning,” said my good-natured landlord, as I was about to put foot in stirrup. “We shall have a storm before many hours are over; and the roads are unco’ bad and hilly, you know.”

Yes, I knew, for I had travelled the same roads

before ; but I had confidence in my horse, and some reliance on my own judgment of the weather. Allowing for the badness of the roads, I expected to arrive at my destination before dusk, and also before the approaching storm should burst. I had a reason, too, for wishing to make what speed I could ; I had received intelligence that a correspondent of our house had committed an act of bankruptcy, and that my presence was needed on the spot to investigate his affairs. I thanked my considerate landlord, therefore, for his caution, and followed my own plans.

“Aweel, aweel!” said he—he was a Scotchman—“a wilfu’ man maun ha’ his way ;” in another minute, I was trotting through the streets of C——, and in half an hour I was fairly committed to my journey. The road I had to traverse was not simply hilly, it was mountainous ; bad in summer, and in winter almost impassable. It was a little frequented road, rough, rugged, and grass-grown ; and besides, it was extremely complicated, for it was crossed and recrossed by other mountain tracts, or boreens, which, in the absence of direction posts, rendered the choice of the right track exceedingly hazardous. Pretty confident, however, in my general knowledge of the route, I pressed onward.

The appearance of the mountains to be crossed, though gloomy and forlorn, was not uninteresting ; they were almost covered with heath, and occasionally opened to the sight wild and extensive scenery, such as poets would love to look upon, and long for the power to describe. I was not a poet, however ; and my great concern, on that occasion, was to perform the

journey as expeditiously as possible; for signs of the storm, which I had persuaded myself was at a sufficiently safe distance in point of time, began rapidly and swiftly to accumulate. Great masses of black clouds, rising in the western horizon, and thickening as they rose, darkened the atmosphere; and strong, fitful gusts of wind swept over the mountain heights and through the mountain passes, with an icy chilliness which quickened my desire for shelter.

Shelter, however, was not easily attainable. An extent of several miles, which I had already traversed, had presented only two or three mud cabins, inhabited evidently by the lowest class of Irish peasantry; and, these passed, nothing was visible but the dark heath-covered and dreary hill-sides, for many other weary miles. It seemed almost as though I were on the verge, not only of civilization, but of habitable life, and that beyond could be nothing but desolateness.

I put spurs to my horse; but, weary of the interminable climbing, he resisted all my importunities to quicken his slow walk into a brisk trot—plunging forward, indeed, a few paces while the prick and smart of the spur remained, but instantly subsiding into the same slow pace as before. I alighted therefore, and led the way, partly because, by this plan, our progress was more hopeful, and partly also because the change of exercise diffused a more equal warmth over my whole frame.

Meanwhile, the keen wind became keener, and swept across the mountains in stronger gusts and eddies; and the clouds overhead descended, first in a

thick mist, which hid every surrounding object, and next in a torrent of rain, which, in spite of a thick horseman's cloak, soon drenched me to the skin, while it ran down the clayey road with the impetuosity of a resistless current, threatening to change it perhaps into its original and proper character—that of the bed of a mountain stream. Presently, and while I was toiling on, leading my horse by the bridle, a flash of lightning, startlingly bright and vivid, illuminated for a moment the thick, murky gloom in which the mountain was shrouded, and was followed by a terrific peal of thunder. Dazzled by the flash and frightened by the concussion, the poor animal plunged furiously, and, in my efforts to restrain him, the bridle broke, and, turning sharply round, he galloped madly down the mountain side. I followed, with as much speed as I could muster, trusting that the affrighted beast would presently relax his pace; but I only succeeded in catching a parting glimpse of him as he turned out of the road we had so painfully climbed, and pursued his headlong career into the apparently untrodden recesses of the mountains.

Had the loss of my poor horse been the principal one involved in this misfortune, I might perhaps have given up my pursuit for that time, and pressed onward on foot over the hills to the town I was desirous of reaching; but unhappily, as it seemed then, a small portmanteau, strapped behind the saddle, contained not only a considerable sum of money, but papers of importance to my employer, the loss of which would throw our business transactions into almost

inextricable confusion. There was nothing, therefore, for me to do—while blaming myself for my imprudent hurry, which threatened to make good the old proverb of “more haste, less speed”—but to follow up the track of the fugitive horse, trusting that he would presently abate his speed, and give me the opportunity of regaining not only himself, but the treasures he had carried off.

How many weary miles I plunged over, amidst rain, wind, mist, and thunder storm, I cannot tell. I know only that my almost hopeless chase was continued until the gloom of coming night was added to the murky darkness of the tempest, and I sunk to the ground, panting and exhausted with my vain efforts. Until then I had managed to track my fugitive horse by the freshly torn-up turf. Once or twice, indeed, I believe that I approached very near to him, as he halted in his flight and cropped the scanty herbage at his feet; but another lightning flash, or perhaps the sound of my footsteps, started him afresh, and I heard again his hoof-steps gradually dying away in the distance. Exhausted and dispirited, then, I sank on to the wet ground, bitterly conscious of my inability to recover, for that night at least, the faithless companion of my journey, and anxiously wishing to find some shelter from the storm, if only a shepherd's or herdsman's shealing.

With the slenderest expectation of such a refuge, I presently resumed my dreary walk. It had by this time become so dark that I could scarcely discern the ground on which I trod, and was therefore in constant

danger of stumbling over the large stones which encumbered the barren hill-side, or toppling headlong down some precipitous descent. After many narrow escapes of this nature, to my inexpressible relief I came unexpectedly on a boreen or narrow horse-road, leading, as it seemed downwards, into a gorge, between two rugged and elevated hilltops; and I determined to follow it wherever it might lead, trusting that some sign of human habitation would eventually reward my perseverance.

For more than an hour, however, I was doomed to disappointment. Brilliant and almost incessant lighting enabled me to see the faint track, which otherwise would have been hidden in the darkness of night; but I looked around in vain for any signs of shelter. Meanwhile, I had descended into what appeared a deep and doleful valley, surrounded on every side by masses of mountain; but how far I had wandered from the right road, or in what direction, I could not even guess.

"The longest lane has a turning," says the proverb; and a poet informs us, with manifest accuracy, that

"The darkest day—

Live till to-morrow—will have passed away."

The proverb and the moral were both exemplified in my experience, when, almost despairing of help, and ready to sink to the ground again, from the joint effects of bodily fatigue and exposure to the terrible storm which continued to rage overhead and around, I saw a bright light in the midst of the dense

darkness, shining as though from a window on the opposite side of the valley.

To gather myself up, brace my resolution, and hasten with all the little strength that was left me to this blessed haven of hope, was the work of a moment. In ten minutes more I neared the light. It was no "will-o'-the-wisp," but a steady flame, like that of a candle; and a friendly flash of lightning revealed to me a cluster of cabins, nestled in this desolate valley, from the little windows of one of which had shone out, and was still shining, the precious beacon which had guided me to the spot.

I dragged myself to the door and knocked.

No answer; and no wonder, for the uproar of the elements, and the rattling of the crazy tenement, must have drowned the feeble summons. I knocked again, and listened. There were confused noises, as of many voices within; but no reply to my impatient and incessant applications of fists to the door. It was not the time, nor was I in a condition, for ceremony. I felt for a latch, and placed my hand upon a string. Like little Red Riding Hood of the nursery story, I "pulled the bobbin, and the latch flew up," pushed open the door, and—— But the remainder of my adventure demands a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE CONTINUATION OF MY ADVENTURE—AN IRISH WAKE.

I PUSHED open the door, and found myself in a large apartment, mud-floored, mud-walled, and turf-roofed, from the latter of which the heavy rain was dripping, and forming broad puddles below. The light which had shone so brightly across the dark valley now resolved itself into the comparatively feeble emitments of two large candles, with unsnuffed wicks, placed on a long board or table which occupied the middle of the room; a turf fire smouldered on the hearth, and filled the room with its close, suffocating fumes; while gathered around the hearth and table, some standing, others seated, either on the bare ground or on rough planks, was a large and motley assemblage of both sexes and of every age, from sixteen to three score and ten. How they were employed was manifest from the strong perfume of tobacco and mountain dew (illicit whisky) which, striking upon me as I entered, almost overpowered my senses, and would have caused me to retreat as suddenly as I had intruded, but for the emergency of my condition; and from the cups, cans, handleless mugs, and footless glasses, which clicked, and clinked, and jingled, being pushed about by the unsteady hands of the strange party.

It needed only a glance to perceive that many of these—not wedding guests—were already verging upon

intoxication. Yet there was nothing convivial in their excess. The females sat with dishevelled hair, and otherwise in picturesque attire; and while they sipped their fiery beverage, and inhaled the rank smoke of the rankest tobacco through their short black pipes—for nearly all were smoking, women as well as men—tears were flowing plentifully down their cheeks, and they rocked themselves to and fro, uttering low crooning moans and cries, indicative of sore mental disquietude and distress. The men, also, glared fiercely and sullenly at each other and at an object on the table; and they conversed in low and guarded tones, but with threatening gestures, knitted brows, and clenched fists, as though under the influence of some overpowering passion—it might be of grief wrought to desperation, or remorse, or revenge.

I have spoken of “an object on the table.” That object was a corpse, wrapped in a sheet, the head and countenance only being uncovered. A white cloth was interposed between it and the table or board, falling over the sides nearly to the ground, and a plate of salt was placed on its breast.

The dead body was that of a man, probably some thirty years of age, and the ghastliness of the countenance was fearfully enhanced, not only by the dull glimmer of the unsnuffed candles, but by a gaping wound, as though from a sword cut, which extended from the left temple to the corner of the mouth, laying open the cheek. Evidently no effort had been made to hide or cover the wound; and as evidently, the contemplation of this terrific sight was stirring up the

thoughts and feelings of the excitable beings around me, friends and relations of the slain man, to purposes of deadly revenge.

For the man had been slain. I remembered now that, while at C——, I had heard of a recent skirmish between a party of revenue officers and a band of illicit distillers and smugglers on the mountains, whose secret haunts had been discovered. Unhappily, these events were too common in Ireland at that time to attract much attention ; and beyond the fact that blood had been shed, I had neither sought nor heard particulars of the conflict. All this came into my mind as I looked on, and, if escape had been possible, I would gladly have retreated to the bare hill side and the pitiless storm.

But escape was not possible. My entrance had not been noticed, and, as I stood in the shadow cast by a projecting jamb of the rude hearth, I had time to make the few observations I have jotted down ; but before a minute had passed away, the eyes of one of the company rested on me, and the next instant I was dragged into the apartment, and surrounded by the infuriated throng, who wanted only a victim on whom to expend their insane vengeance ; and the first words I heard uttered convinced me that I was mistaken for an emissary of government—the detested government, whose minions had, as they would have argued, robbed them of their property, and murdered their friend.

Happily, no deadly weapons were at that time in their hands, and in a momentary pause in the storm

of execrations which fell upon me, I strove to make myself heard. Rapidly, I endeavoured to explain that I was an unfortunate traveller, benighted and storm-beaten, innocent of all evil intention towards, or even of any knowledge of them, and seeking only shelter and rest. It would have been better for me not to have spoken: my speech betrayed me for an Englishman, and my voice was drowned in bitter curses and awful threatenings.

"Hear to the murthering villain!" shouted one, aiming at me a heavy blow, which I happily avoided. But other blows fell upon me thick, and I was beaten to the ground. It was evidently a struggle for life, and never had my life seemed in such imminent peril as now, and death so near. The number of my assailants, however, contributed something to my immediate preservation; for their furious strokes, dealt almost at random, fell as often on each other as on their intended victim; and, availing myself of the confusion that ensued, I rose bleeding, and staggered to my feet.

Meanwhile the females had fled, shrieking, to the only other apartment the cabin contained, all except one aged woman, of stout masculine proportions, whom I had not before observed, but who now threw herself into the *mêlée*, and with her powerful arm arrested more than one hand raised against me.

"A purty night's work ye are afther making of this, Misther Donovan," she shouted, seizing my first assailant by the collar, and dragging him violently aside. "Is this the way ye trate a sthranger that—"

The voice was enough. Shaking off, with a sudden exertion of strength which surprised me then, and which surprises me now that I recall the scene to memory, the hold which two or three strong men had on me, I sprang forwards, grappled the hand of the friendly and energetic pleader, and looked her full in the face.

"Peggy Magrath!" I cried, "have you forgotten Roland Leigh?"

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst of that tumultuous throng, it would not have been more startling than that sudden exclamation of mine. Hands raised against me with murderous intention were suspended in mid-air, shouts of vengeance were arrested in their utterance, and eyes, which had the moment before glared upon me in fury, now opened wider with curiosity. For one moment the woman held me at arm's length, putting aside, with her disengaged hand, the hair which had fallen over my forehead. The next moment I was clasped to her bosom, which heaved with strange emotion.

"Core of me heart! Me own darling! Come to me—closer—closer!" she sobbed out, pressing me yet tighter, covering my cheeks with kisses and tears, and waving one hand over me, as though to protect me from further injury. But there was no need. The foremost among the enraged assailants speedily ranged themselves by our side, and I soon found that I was in almost as much danger of being overpowered by the energetic demonstrations of kindness and penitence of Peggy's excitable and impulsive

countrymen, as I had been of destruction from their fierce and unreasonable enmity. But I shall not prolong my description of this scene. I could not if I would; for the excitement of that desperate struggle, added to the fatigue I had undergone in the storm which yet raged, and the sudden change from the cold night air to the stifling atmosphere of that cabin, nearly overcame me. I became dizzy and should have fallen, but for Peggy's strong arm. I gasped for breath, cried out feebly for air, and to my inexpressible relief, scarcely knowing how, I found myself gently half led and half supported out of that fearful death chamber, and into another and a near cabin—Peggy Magrath's own.

CHAPTER LVII.

AND LAST.

I HAVE little more to add to my story, and what remains shall be told in few words. Before morning the storm cleared away, and the sun rose on a scene of wild grandeur, which I have rarely seen surpassed. Meanwhile, divested of my wet garments, and resting on a couch of dry heath, near to a blazing fire in poor Peggy's cabin, with her seated by my side, I heard the history of her wanderings; how she had sought me in vain at Whiskers' Rents after her release from prison—how shame for her disgrace had driven her to another, and an obscurer part of the wide town; but how, constantly, her thoughts rested upon me—and

how, at last, hope forsook her, and she determined to end her days in "poor ould Oireland, among her owne people." I listened to this till sleep overpowered me; and when I woke, with the sun darting in through the chink of the mud wall, poor Peggy was preparing for me a breakfast which an epicure would not have disdained. I found out afterwards that, while I was sleeping, my dear old nurse had walked miles to procure the materials of which it was composed, with the same devotedness of heart and purpose as when, many years before, she had begged "a dhrink of butthermilk" for her poor little orphan boy.

I stayed two days in the mountain valley, and witnessed the funeral of the dead man, on whose *wake* I had intruded; but I shall not describe this. Meanwhile the men, who had so nearly sacrificed me to their blind revenge, almost overwhelmed me with their contrition and proffered services. They said they would go barefoot to the end of the world for me; and though this was hyperbolical, I believe they would have done much to prove the sincerity of their repentance. Indeed they did much; for they scoured the country round to recover my stray horse, which was at length brought to me, little the worse for its wanderings, and with the portmanteau and property it contained untouched.

"There's both good and bad in ould Oireland," said Peggy Magrath, triumphantly; "but, Roland, ye mightn't have been so loocky if ye had lost the poor baste in Yorkshire, let alone all England over;" and I partly agreed with her.

I should do scant justice to Peggy's bewilderment, if I were to attempt to describe it, when she found how I had been raised from poverty and degradation to comfort and respectability. The conviction of its being so loomed upon her at last, however, and her joy was boundless.

"And now, Peggy, my first, best earthly friend next to my poor mother, we must not part again now that we have been brought together," said I.

"Is it part wid ye, I would?" said she; and she burst into tears.

We did not part; or, rather, we parted then, to meet in Dublin a few weeks later. I was there, preparing for my return to England, and had taken a passage for two, when the waiter at the inn announced to me that an elderly woman was asking for me in the hall.

"It is the person I expected; ask her to come in to me," I said.

Exit waiter, and enter——yes, it must be Peggy Magrath; but so changed, exteriorly!

"I wouldn't go to disgrace ye, Roland," she whispered, when I had expressed my admiration of the neat, clean, and respectable appearance she made: "and I have not spended all the money you gave me;" and she put back a purse into my hand.

"But how then have you managed? and how is it you have delayed so long? I was afraid——"

"Niver fear for Peggy," said she. "Is it manage? Why shure and shure, I came all the way a-fut. D'ye think Peggy 'ud be casting away your money, riding in them cars? Is it delay? Ye're not gone yet, darling."

“No, but we are going to-morrow, Peggy.”

And on the morrow we left Ireland behind us—Mrs. Magrath and I. “Some natural tears she shed, but wiped them soon”; “for wasn’t she wid her own heart’s darling?” she said.

We travelled together into Yorkshire; and I saw my dear old nurse comfortably established in a small cottage near to the factory, for she would neither live in my house, nor be beholden to me for her support.

“Whist, darling,” she persisted, when I returned to the subject once and again, “Paggy Magrath ’ill not disgrace ye, any way; but ye’ll not refuse her to ’arn her owne bit and sup so long as her poor old bones last out. She’ll be more continted, darling; and she’ll not disgrace ye.”

She didn’t disgrace me, dear old nurse and protectress of my helpless childhood! my next to mother! She knew her own weak points and besetting temptations; and, for my sake, she abjured at once and for ever the dangerous seductions of the spirit bottle. She became infirm at last; but before then—

Well, before then, Fanny Grey was no longer Fanny Grey. I very well remember one pleasant and memorable journey into Kent. I went there alone, and returned to Yorkshire in good company. And I remember one particular event that happened during my stay at Daffodil Farm. I remember, too, my old friend Mr. Blake’s parting words, when he shook hands with me at his gate after my dear little new wife was safely seated in the coach that was to convey us to London, on our way home. I need not

repeat them ; but they were something about honesty, industry, and God's blessing ; and then he shook hands with me again very heartily, and the next minute I was seated beside Fanny—not Fanny Grey ; then the coach was in motion, and when we looked round for a last glance, we could see more handkerchiefs than one put to more faces than one. And yet it was not a sorrowful occasion either.

The first to welcome Fanny to her new home was Peggy Magrath ; and years later, when Fanny was past the bloom of bridish beauty, and Peggy was an old, old woman, it was Fanny who tenderly and lovingly nursed the kind old nurse of her husband's childhood, and who succeeded, as I humbly hope and firmly believe, in leading her to the Good Shepherd.

Before this time, I received intelligence of the death of my grandfather, after he had dwindled into utter childishness of mind and helplessness of body. His property descended to my cousin ; but not long afterwards I received a characteristic epistle from her, offering to share the inheritance with me. What my answer was is of no particular consequence, it being a sort of family secret which I have no right to divulge. I may say, however, that I was present at my cousin's wedding, and that a life-long friendly intercourse sprang up in due time between our families.

I never heard more of my poor father.

I am an old man now. Those of whom I have written are nearly all lost to this world. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." I have recorded some of the events of my earlier life ;

respecting my later years, let it suffice to add, that "goodness and mercy have followed me." I have had much prosperity, not unchecked by reverses, much happiness, not untinged by sorrow. But by my side is still a kind, loving companion, and a gentle comforter, who, having for near upon forty years shared alike my hopes and fears, my joys and griefs, is the support of my age, as she was the guiding star of my youth—my last best earthly bosom friend and teacher, as she was the first who

"Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

And now, reader, my story is told; and its use is not far hidden, I trust, beneath its surface. Surely it may teach some down-trodden one that there is no condition in life so hopeless as to be beyond the reach of amelioration and redemption; and that there is a POWER to which he may look, and an ARM on which he may lean for strength and encouragement, when worldly helpers are few; so that, trusting in God with an evangelical faith, and looking up to him with filial confidence and love, he may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me," and—

"When lowest sunk in grief and shame,
Filled with affliction's bitter cup,
Lost to relations, friends, and fame,
Thy powerful arm can raise me up.
"Thy powerful consolations cheer,
Thy smiles suppress the deep-drawn sigh,
Thy hand can dry the trickling tear,
That secret wets the mourner's eye"

If this be accomplished, this story will not have been written in vain.

But surely it will also yield gratification to those who, in their efforts to do good and communicate, and inspired by the spirit and love of their Divine Master, do not shrink from contact with the dregs of society, but plunge with moral and spiritual heroism into the purlieus of poverty and destitution, and seek to convey into the haunts of indigenous heathendom and homebred crime, the faithful saying which is worthy of *all* acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—even the chief.

Oh, you who prove yourselves to be the best and truest friends of your country by your Christian compassion for those of whom your country is justly ashamed, “be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not”; and seeing, as you lift up your eyes and look around you, that though the harvest is great, the labourers are few, pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth more labourers into the harvest.

